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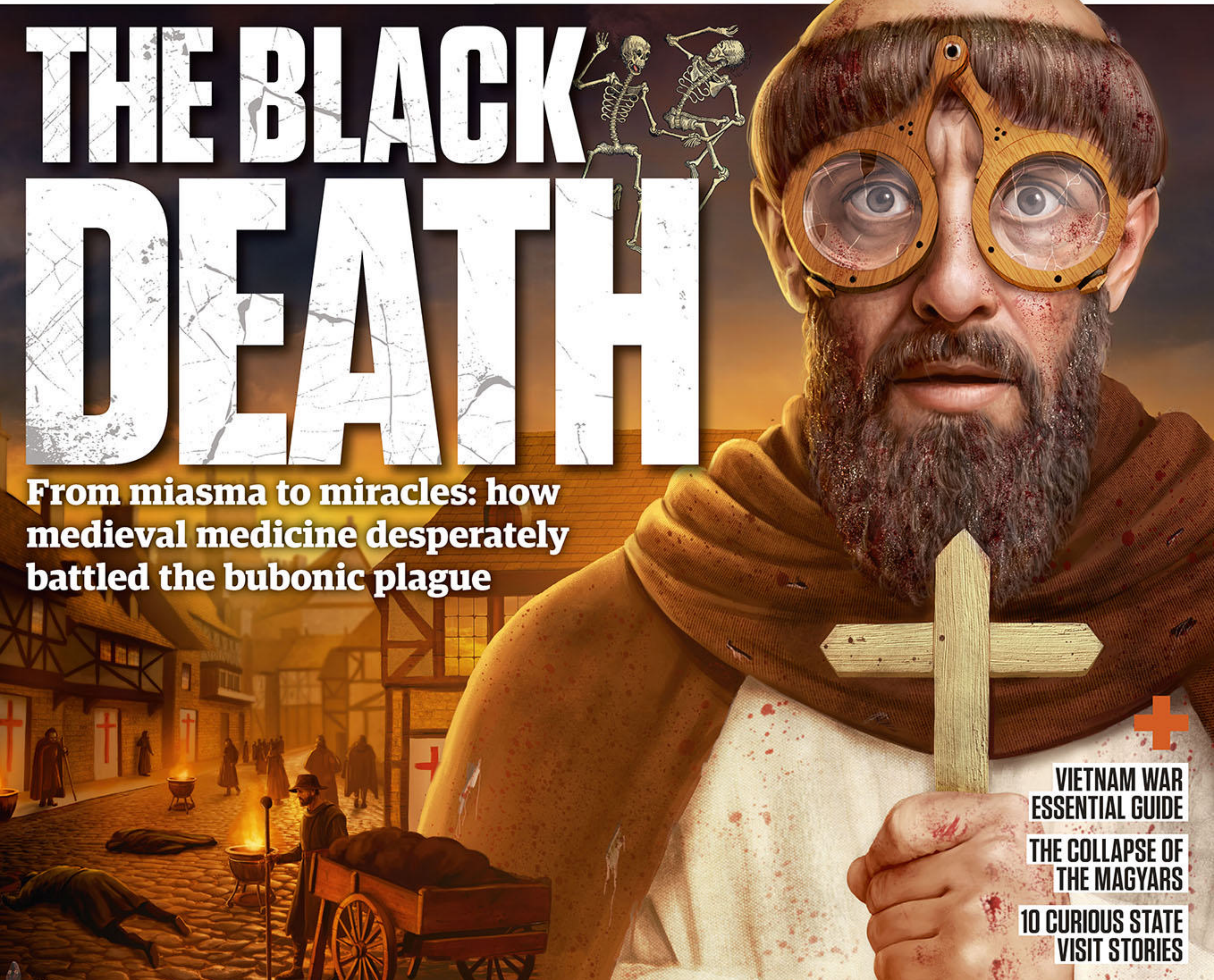
Why stately homes nearly vanished



THE BLACK DEATH

From miasma to miracles: how medieval medicine desperately battled the bubonic plague

+

VIETNAM WAR ESSENTIAL GUIDE

THE COLLAPSE OF THE MAGYARS

10 CURIOUS STATE VISIT STORIES

AFRICAN FOLKLORE

What can we learn from mythic tales?

LAND OF THE RISING GUN

When the samurai embraced firearms

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The king who built a nation

FUTURE

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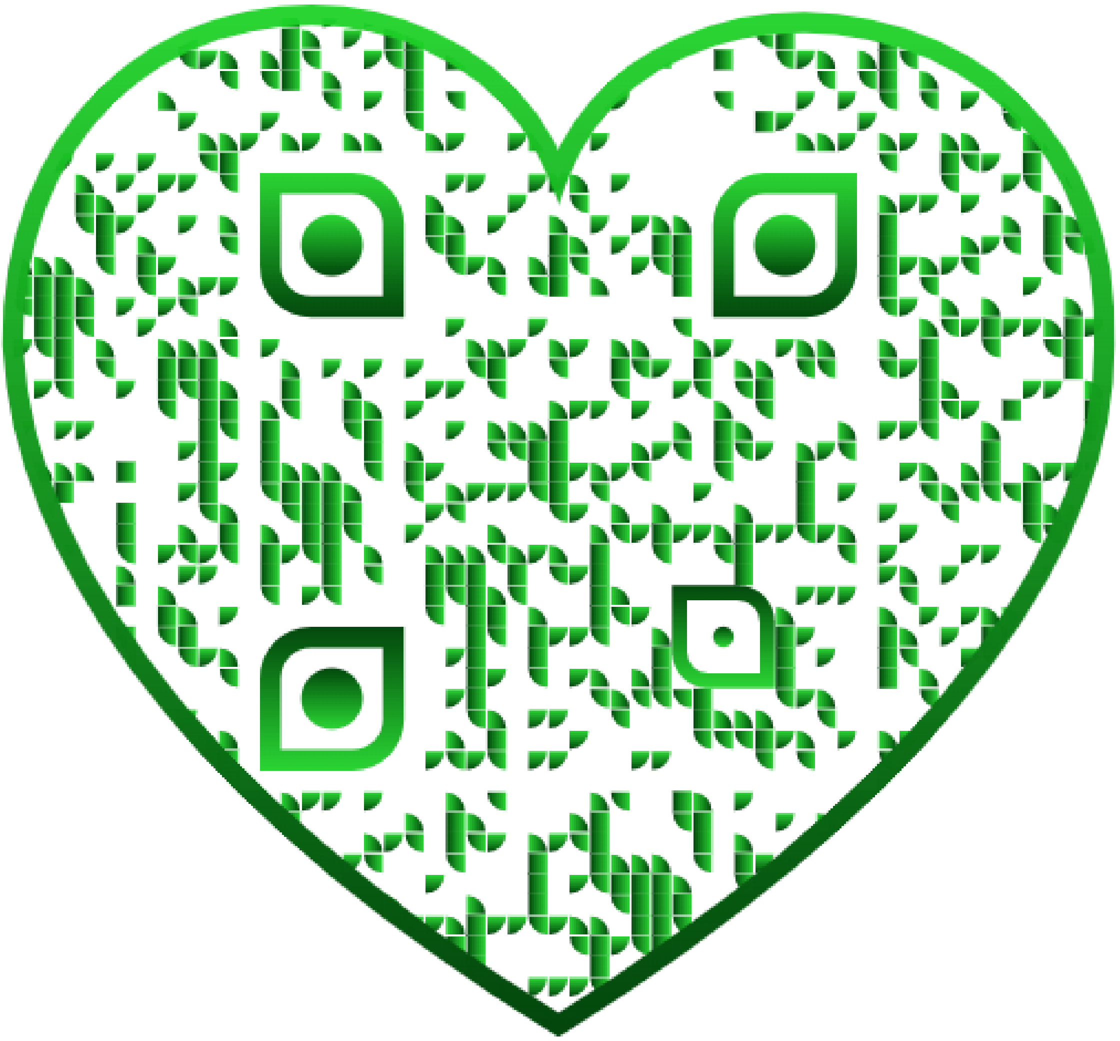

CHRONOMETER
300m|1000ft
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from Christopher Ward

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Do your research.

Christopher
Ward

christopherward.com

ALL ABOUT HISTORY

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SCAN TO GET OUR NEW-LOOK NEWSLETTERS

A Black Death scene from an exhibition in Weymouth, England

Welcome

It's challenging to get your head around the enormous impact of the Black Death, which killed at least one-third of the population of Europe. Thankfully that's a level of devastation we've not had to confront again since, although the world has certainly come close. Looking back at the impact, it's interesting to note how the world emerged from this health emergency. There was a drive for efficiency to get the most out of a now-depleted workforce, and a push for higher wages. I can't help but look at where we are today, on a smaller scale, coming out of the Covid pandemic with the rise in AI use across various sectors and a cost of living crisis.

Another example of how history doesn't repeat, but sometimes rhymes? You can be the judge of that yourself as Dr Nick Summerton offers his expert insight into how the Black Death spread and then slowly receded across Europe. This issue you can also learn about how samurai embraced the gun, why stately homes declined and rose again, what we can learn from African folklore, how one man unified France and some fascinating stories from state visits through history. I hope you enjoy the issue.

Jonathan Gordon
Editor

Find our social media channels and more at **linktr.ee/AllAboutHistory**

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Defining Moments

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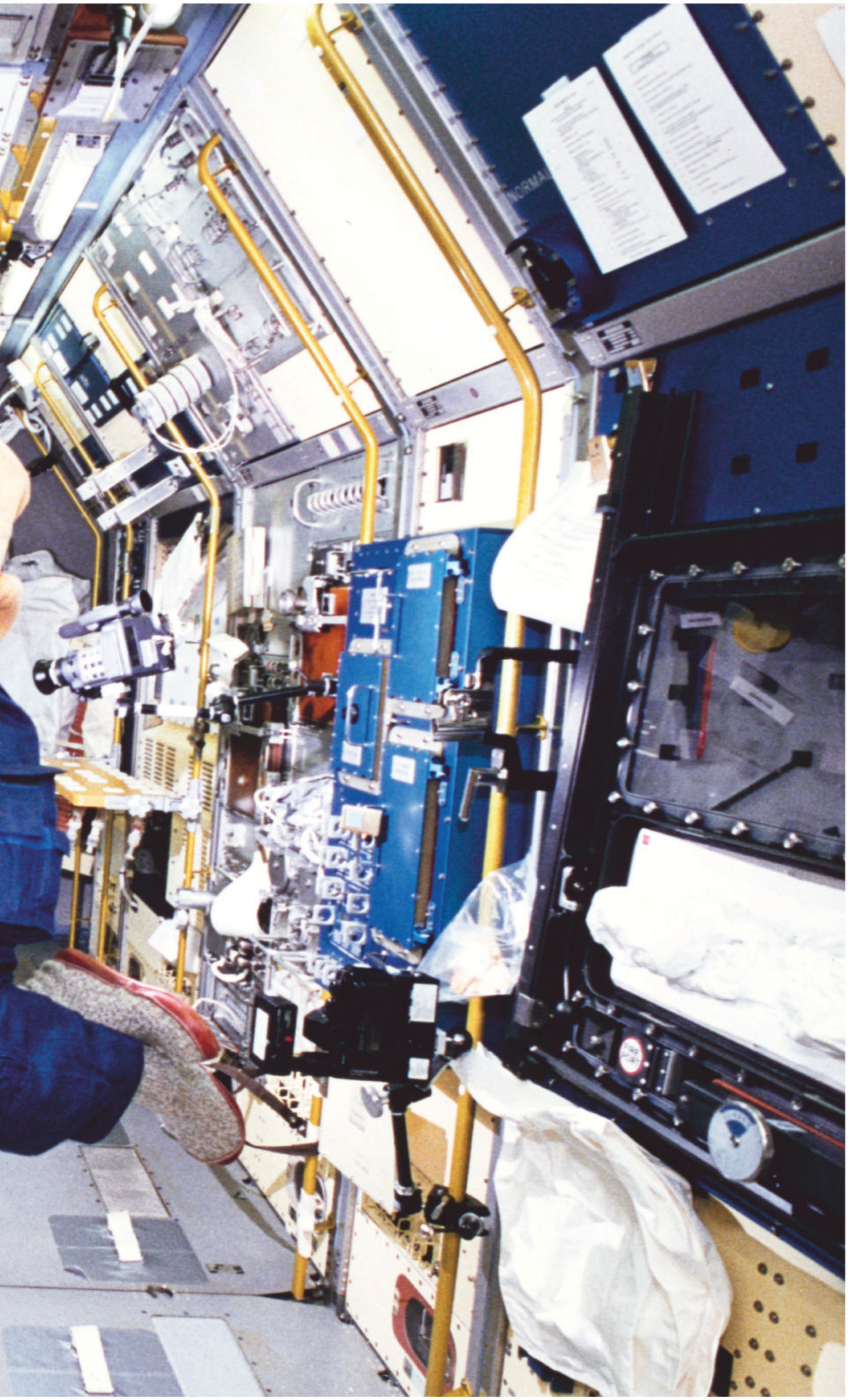

12 September 1992

FIRST AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMAN IN SPACE

Alabama-born NASA astronaut Mae Jemison became the first African American woman in space when she travelled on the Space Shuttle Endeavour as part of the STS-47 mission. She spent eight days in space and orbited the Earth 127 times while conducting scientific experiments aboard the Spacelab Japan module. The mission was Jemison's only space flight. She left NASA the following year and embarked on careers as an entrepreneur, educator and author.

8 September 1960

ALFRED HITCHCOCK'S *PSYCHO* RELEASED

The groundbreaking horror film *Psycho* was released in the US and changed filmmaking forever. Directed by Alfred Hitchcock and starring Anthony Perkins and Janet Leigh, it was loosely based on the crimes of serial killer Ed Gein. *Psycho* was one of the earliest slasher movies and shocked viewers with its violence, and is considered one of the greatest horror films of all time.

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All over the world right now, agents are assessing threat levels, monitoring security risks and tracking targets. From presidential security to espionage, discover the dark secrets of their hidden world...

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ALL ABOUT THE VIETNAM WAR

From French imperial conflict to American withdrawal, we explore the first 'television war' and its impact

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THE GLOBAL WAR IN VIETNAM

Main image: © Getty Images

Written by Emily Staniforth, Callum McKelvie, Jonathan Gordon

Key Events

2 MAR 1965 OPERATION ROLLING THUNDER BEGINS

Lasting just over three years, Rolling Thunder is a vast bombing campaign involving the US and South Vietnamese Air Forces and the US Navy. The operation comes to an end in 1968 in a failed attempt to convince the North Vietnamese to negotiate.

1969 DRAFT LOTTERY

Following criticism that the previous US draft system is unfair, a highly publicised lottery is held at Selective Service Headquarters. The lottery utilises the conscripts' birthdates and helps choose the date on which they will be drafted. The final draft lottery is held on 12 March 1975.

HO CHI MINH DECLARES VIETNAMESE INDEPENDENCE 1945

Communist Ho Chi Minh begins the Vietnamese war of independence against the French. Over the subsequent decades he aims to establish a single communist Vietnamese state.

THE BATTLE OF DIEN BIEN PHU 7 May 1954

Following eight years of conflict, the Viet Minh are victorious against the occupying French in Indochina, ending the First Indochina War.

GENEVA ACCORDS 1954

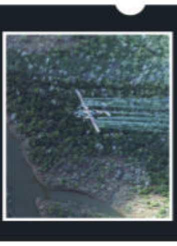
The accords see Vietnam divided across the 17th parallel, resulting in the North and South. Conflict continues between the two sides.

NGO DINH DIEM TAKES OFFICE 26 October 1955

Emperor Bao Dai is removed from office and Ngo Dinh Diem establishes himself as president of South Vietnam, proclaiming the Republic of Vietnam in the process.

MILITARY ASSISTANCE ADVISORY GROUP SENT TO VIETNAM 1 November 1955

The USA's Military Assistance Advisory Group is deployed to Vietnam to help train troops in the South. This is the first sign of American involvement in the conflict.



AGENT ORANGE FIRST USED 9 January 1962

The US military begins using a herbicide known as Agent Orange to destroy dense jungle and foliage. The toxic substance has long-term effects on the population and environment.

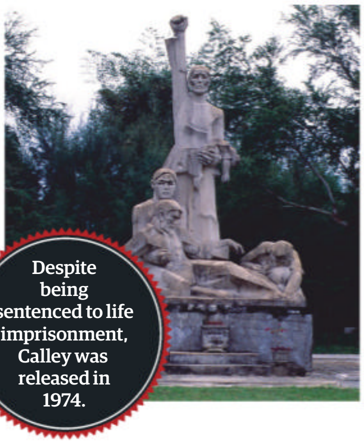
9 MAR 1965 JOHNSON AUTHORISES WIDESPREAD USE OF NAPALM

President Lyndon B Johnson authorises the use of the highly flammable incendiary weapon. The substance is used by the military to target enemy troops and clear the thick jungle that aids the Viet Cong. In 1980 the UN outlaws the use of napalm on civilians.

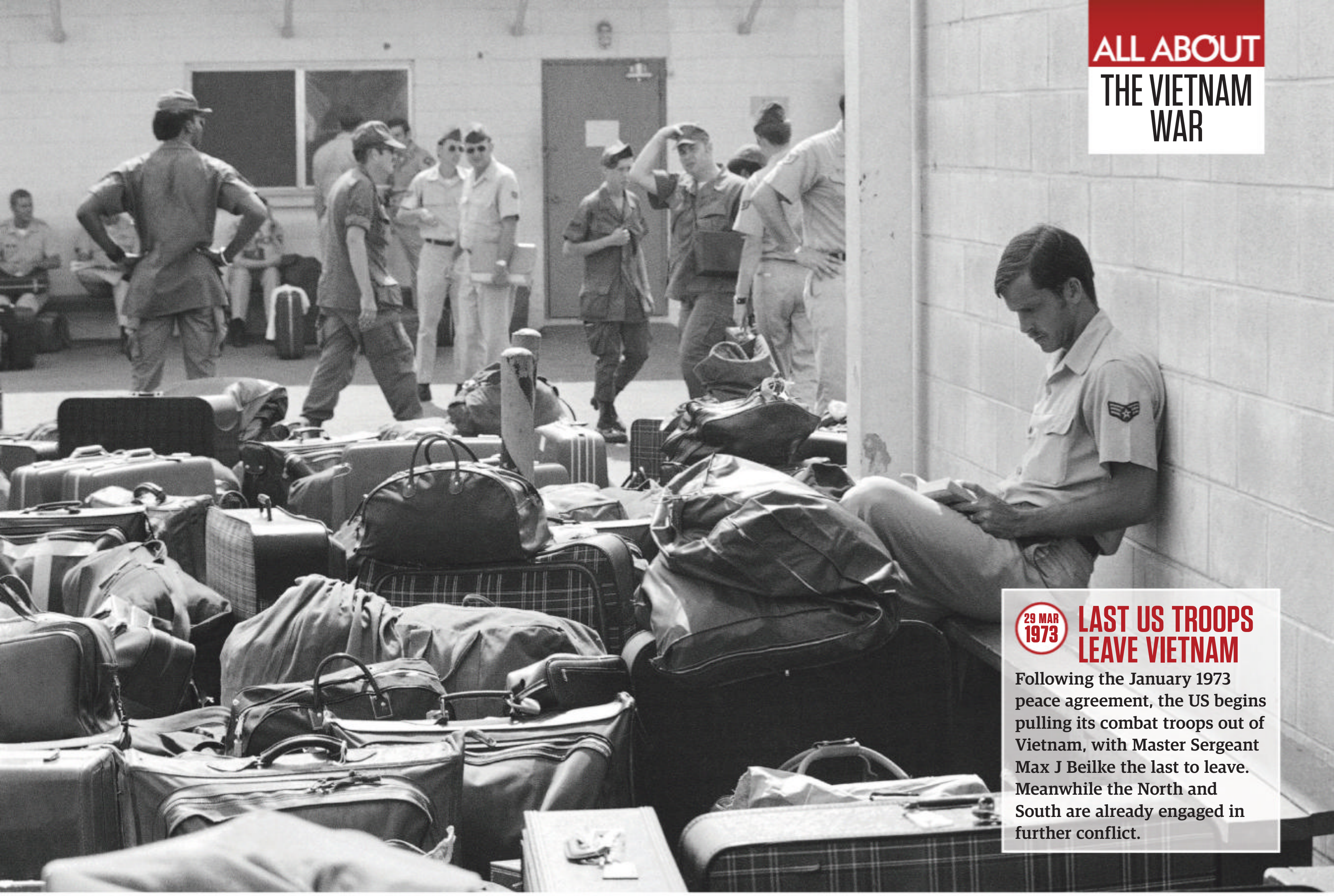
An estimated 338,000 tonnes of napalm was used by the US during the war.

16 MAR 1968 MY LAI MASSACRE

Troops under the command of Lieutenant William Calley begin a 'search and destroy' operation in the village of My Lai. They kill hundreds of civilians, and in September 1969 Calley is charged with murder. The incident causes huge controversy when it's reported in the US.



Despite being sentenced to life imprisonment, Calley was released in 1974.



29 MAR 1973 LAST US TROOPS LEAVE VIETNAM

Following the January 1973 peace agreement, the US begins pulling its combat troops out of Vietnam, with Master Sergeant Max J Beilke the last to leave. Meanwhile the North and South are already engaged in further conflict.

NGO DIEN DINH ASSASSINATED
2nd November 1963

Following his continued discrimination of the Buddhists, South Vietnam president Ngo Dien Dinh is assassinated in a coup d'etat.

GULF OF TONKIN INCIDENT August 1964

North Vietnam forces attack US military ships stationed in the Gulf of Tonkin. This incident leads to further US involvement in the conflict.

ATTACK ON THE US EMBASSY IN SAIGON 31 January 1968

Viet Cong troops invade the grounds of the American embassy in Saigon. Unable to enter the main building, they put it under siege, trapping staff inside.

2 MAR 1965

9 MAR 1965

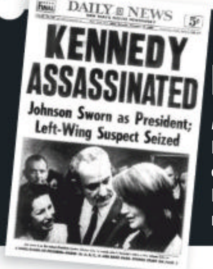
16 MAR 1968

1969

4 MAY 1970

29 MAR 1973

29-30 APRIL 1975



DAILY NEWS

KENNEDY ASSASSINATED

Johnson Sworn as President; Left-Wing Suspect Seized

PRESIDENT KENNEDY ASSASSINATED 22 November 1963

President John F Kennedy is shot dead while campaigning in Dallas, Texas. His successor, Lyndon B Johnson, will increase the US military presence in Vietnam.

TET OFFENSIVE
1968

Beginning in January, the North carries out a number of devastating surprise attacks against the South involving 85,000 troops.

THE INVASION OF CAMBODIA
29 APRIL 1970

President Richard Nixon announces the expansion of US operations into Cambodia after secretly arranging bombing campaigns in an attempt to disrupt North Vietnamese supply lines.

4 MAY 1970 KENT STATE SHOOTINGS

During anti-war protests at Kent State University, the Ohio National Guard is deployed. Using live ammunition, they fire into the crowd – four students are killed and nine wounded. In response, a nationwide student strike occurs, temporarily closing many universities.

29-30 APRIL 1975 OPERATION FREQUENT WIND

In Saigon the US begins evacuating its citizens and those loyal to South Vietnam's regime. The event is preceded by a 30-second radio broadcast of Bing Crosby's *White Christmas*.

All images: © Alamy, © Getty Images

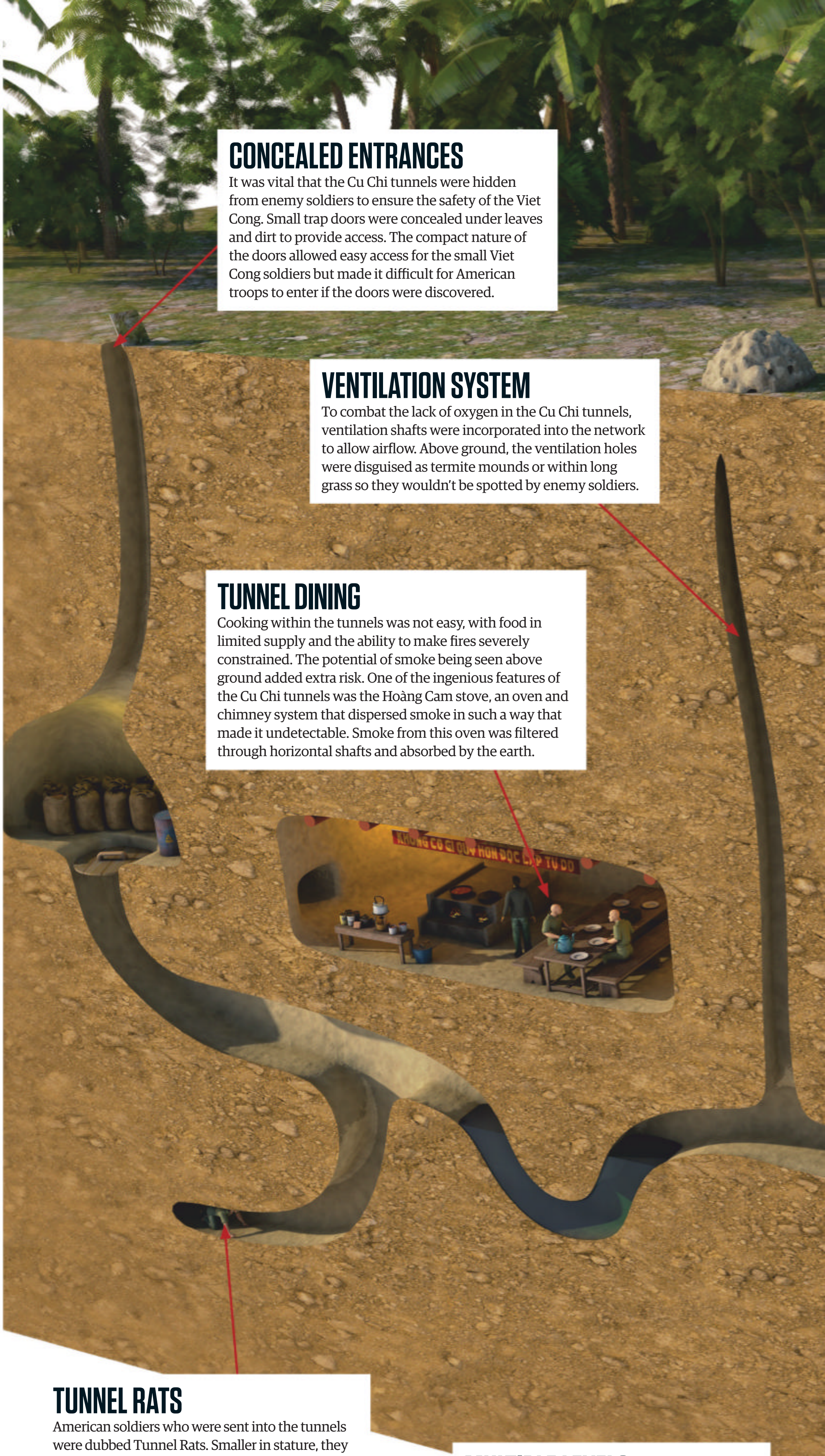
CU CHI TUNNELS

Vietnam
c.1940s – present

Originally spanning around 250km, Vietnam's Cu Chi tunnels served as a vital military network for the Viet Cong. The tunnels were first built in the 1940s during the First Indochina War (1946-54) to connect villages and provide underground shelters for the Viet Minh as they fought the French. Dug into the clay by soldiers and villagers using simple tools, the impressive labyrinth was made up of narrow corridors that acted as spaces to store supplies and seek safety.

By the time the Vietnam War was raging, the tunnels had been expanded across the Cu Chi rural district and stretched to the capital Saigon. No longer just a place for shelter, the Viet Cong utilised the tunnels to their advantage. They became a subterranean military stronghold where Viet Cong fighters could live, eat, strategise, move around, hide and treat their wounded. Life underground meant the Viet Cong were able to evade detection from US forces. They could appear out of nowhere to carry out surprise attacks before disappearing again, gaining the upper hand over the better-equipped American and South Vietnamese forces.

Conditions in the tunnels were harsh due to the limited of oxygen, cramped spaces and sparse food supplies. However, the underground network was vital for the Viet Cong to combat enemy forces and proved a threat to the US military. In attempts to uncover the Cu Chi tunnels, American forces sent soldiers to find the network's hidden entrances in 1966. When this proved largely unsuccessful, they tried to destroy the tunnels by carpet bombing and dropping grenades into the shafts. But the tunnels remained steadfast and endured to this day. Now a major tourist attraction, the Cu Chi tunnels allow visitors to explore the network, and some of the tunnels have been widened to accommodate people more easily.



CONCEALED ENTRANCES

It was vital that the Cu Chi tunnels were hidden from enemy soldiers to ensure the safety of the Viet Cong. Small trap doors were concealed under leaves and dirt to provide access. The compact nature of the doors allowed easy access for the small Viet Cong soldiers but made it difficult for American troops to enter if the doors were discovered.

VENTILATION SYSTEM

To combat the lack of oxygen in the Cu Chi tunnels, ventilation shafts were incorporated into the network to allow airflow. Above ground, the ventilation holes were disguised as termite mounds or within long grass so they wouldn't be spotted by enemy soldiers.

TUNNEL DINING

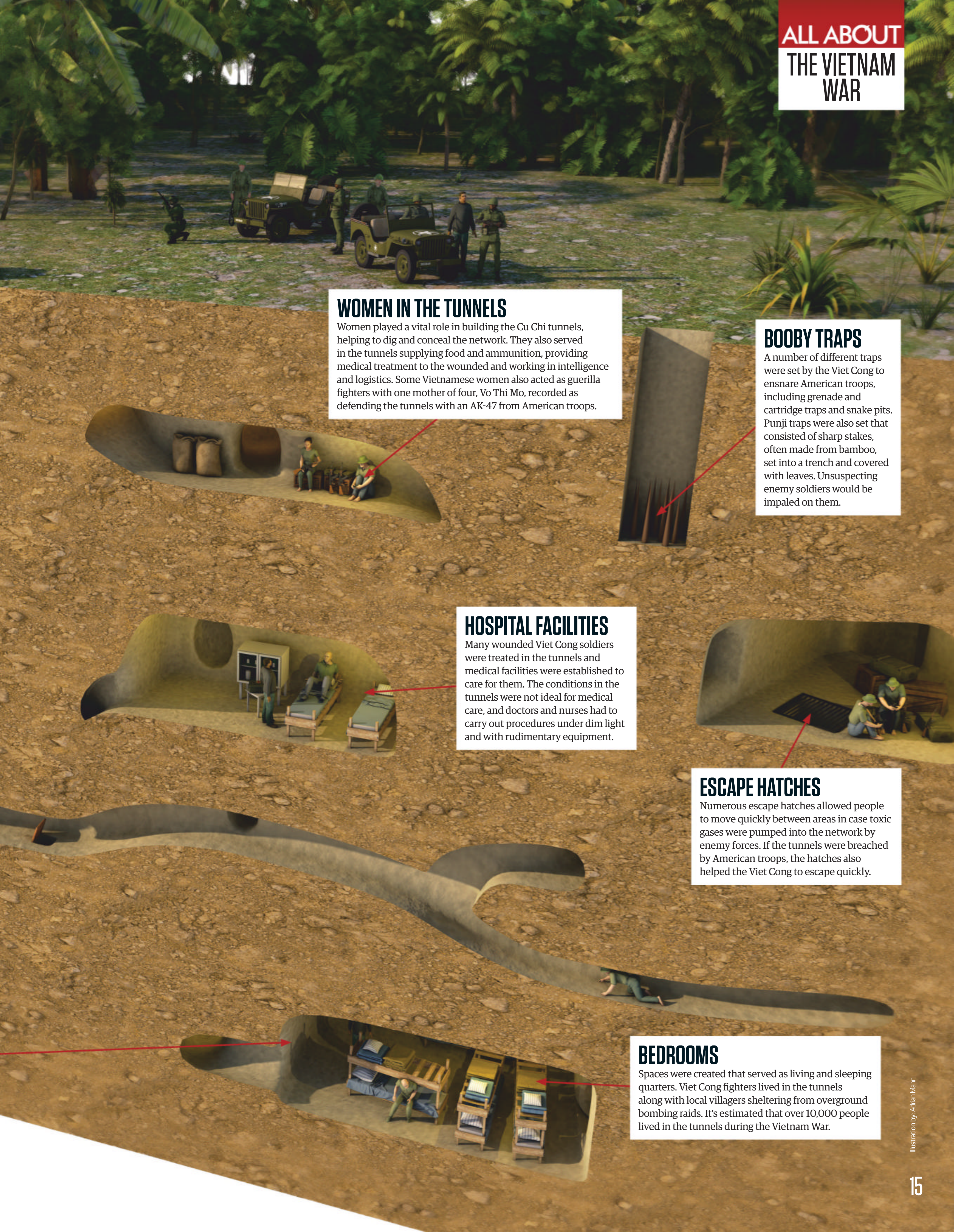
Cooking within the tunnels was not easy, with food in limited supply and the ability to make fires severely constrained. The potential of smoke being seen above ground added extra risk. One of the ingenious features of the Cu Chi tunnels was the Hoàng Cam stove, an oven and chimney system that dispersed smoke in such a way that made it undetectable. Smoke from this oven was filtered through horizontal shafts and absorbed by the earth.

TUNNEL RATS

American soldiers who were sent into the tunnels were dubbed Tunnel Rats. Smaller in stature, they were trained to fight in the underground network. The work was highly dangerous due to booby traps, and the Viet Cong were also more accustomed to the dark, cramped environment, giving them an advantage in tunnel combat.

MULTIPLE LEVELS

Digging the tunnels at different levels underground meant increased protection for the people living in them. Heading to the lower levels of the network protected the Viet Cong from aerial bombing attacks, as well as gas and artillery attacks, and allowed the soldiers to protect their armament and food supplies.



WOMEN IN THE TUNNELS

Women played a vital role in building the Cu Chi tunnels, helping to dig and conceal the network. They also served in the tunnels supplying food and ammunition, providing medical treatment to the wounded and working in intelligence and logistics. Some Vietnamese women also acted as guerilla fighters with one mother of four, Vo Thi Mo, recorded as defending the tunnels with an AK-47 from American troops.

BOOBY TRAPS

A number of different traps were set by the Viet Cong to ensnare American troops, including grenade and cartridge traps and snake pits. Punji traps were also set that consisted of sharp stakes, often made from bamboo, set into a trench and covered with leaves. Unsuspecting enemy soldiers would be impaled on them.

HOSPITAL FACILITIES

Many wounded Viet Cong soldiers were treated in the tunnels and medical facilities were established to care for them. The conditions in the tunnels were not ideal for medical care, and doctors and nurses had to carry out procedures under dim light and with rudimentary equipment.

ESCAPE HATCHES

Numerous escape hatches allowed people to move quickly between areas in case toxic gases were pumped into the network by enemy forces. If the tunnels were breached by American troops, the hatches also helped the Viet Cong to escape quickly.

BEDROOMS

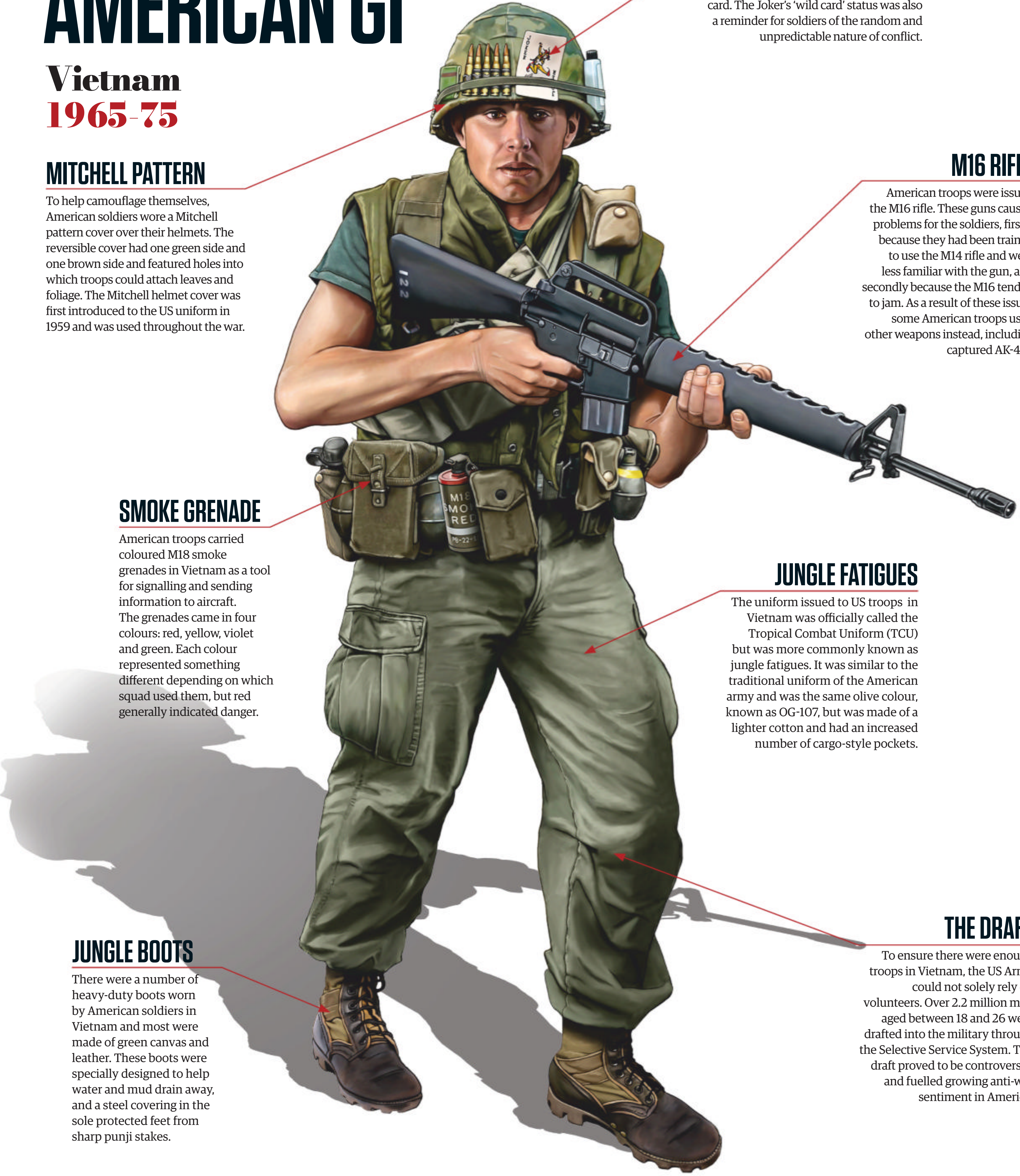
Spaces were created that served as living and sleeping quarters. Viet Cong fighters lived in the tunnels along with local villagers sheltering from overground bombing raids. It's estimated that over 10,000 people lived in the tunnels during the Vietnam War.

Illustration by: Adrian Mann

Anatomy

AMERICAN GI

Vietnam
1965-75



LUCKY CHARM

Some soldiers carried good-luck charms while fighting in Vietnam, such as the Joker playing card. The Joker's 'wild card' status was also a reminder for soldiers of the random and unpredictable nature of conflict.

MITCHELL PATTERN

To help camouflage themselves, American soldiers wore a Mitchell pattern cover over their helmets. The reversible cover had one green side and one brown side and featured holes into which troops could attach leaves and foliage. The Mitchell helmet cover was first introduced to the US uniform in 1959 and was used throughout the war.

M16 RIFLE

American troops were issued the M16 rifle. These guns caused problems for the soldiers, firstly because they had been trained to use the M14 rifle and were less familiar with the gun, and secondly because the M16 tended to jam. As a result of these issues some American troops used other weapons instead, including captured AK-47s.

SMOKE GRENADE

American troops carried coloured M18 smoke grenades in Vietnam as a tool for signalling and sending information to aircraft. The grenades came in four colours: red, yellow, violet and green. Each colour represented something different depending on which squad used them, but red generally indicated danger.

JUNGLE FATIGUES

The uniform issued to US troops in Vietnam was officially called the Tropical Combat Uniform (TCU) but was more commonly known as jungle fatigues. It was similar to the traditional uniform of the American army and was the same olive colour, known as OG-107, but was made of a lighter cotton and had an increased number of cargo-style pockets.

JUNGLE BOOTS

There were a number of heavy-duty boots worn by American soldiers in Vietnam and most were made of green canvas and leather. These boots were specially designed to help water and mud drain away, and a steel covering in the sole protected feet from sharp punji stakes.

THE DRAFT

To ensure there were enough troops in Vietnam, the US Army could not solely rely on volunteers. Over 2.2 million men aged between 18 and 26 were drafted into the military through the Selective Service System. The draft proved to be controversial and fuelled growing anti-war sentiment in America.

Historical Treasures

LEICA M2 CAMERA

How a simple photograph came to define the Vietnam War

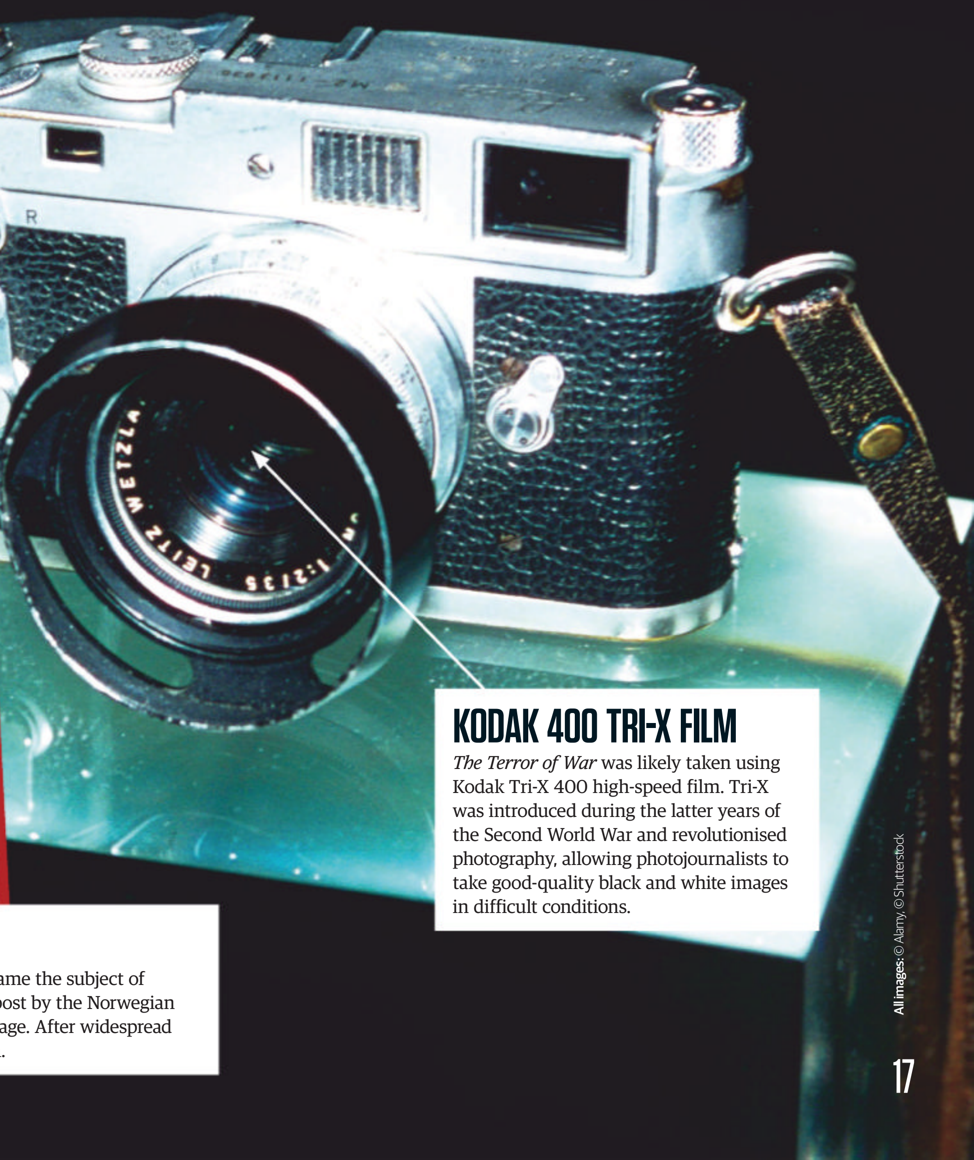
South Vietnam

On 8 June 1972, photographer Nick Út witnessed a horrific sight. Napalm had just been dropped on the village of Trang Bàng, forcing civilians to flee for their lives, and during the chaos a photograph was taken that came to be the defining image of the Vietnam War. It was a picture of young children screaming in terror, among them a naked, badly burned nine-year-old girl - Phan Thi Kim Phúc. The camera thought to have been used was this Leica M2, now in the collection of the Science Museum in London.

The image, known as *The Terror of War* - or sometimes simply *Napalm Girl* - had a profound impact when it was published in the United States and immediately became a powerful symbol for the anti-war lobby. Phúc had third-degree burns to 30 percent of her body and spent 14 months in hospital recovering from the tragedy that claimed the lives of two of her brothers. Although she initially loathed the picture, she came to understand its significance and is now a prominent anti-war activist.

In January 2025, controversy was stirred when the documentary *The Stringer* claimed that Nguyen Thành Nghe, a freelance photographer, or 'stringer', had in fact taken the image, not Út. Associated Press (AP) conducted an investigation to determine who was the photograph's true author, and on 16 May it presented a 96-page report that said there was no "decisive evidence" to suggest Út was not the true author. But there was another twist in the tale: AP's report claimed it was in fact Út's late brother's Pentax camera that was used to take the photograph and not the Leica M2.

Over 50 years since the photo was taken, the controversy continues to rage. Nonetheless, the Leica M2 and the photograph remain important historical artefacts that showcase a key moment in war reporting.



LEICA M2

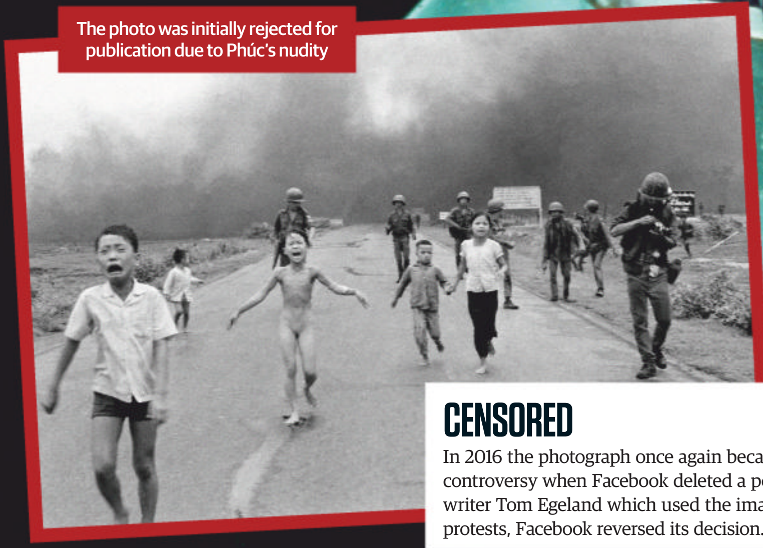
The camera first came onto the market in 1957 and was an attempt to provide a cheaper alternative to the Leica M3. The M2 was discontinued in 1968 so was already obsolete by the time *The Terror of War* was taken.

THE MEDIA AND THE WAR

The extensive media coverage of the Vietnam War was instrumental in turning American public opinion against the conflict. Due to the amount of TV reporting of the fighting, the war became known as 'the first television war'.

KODAK 400 TRI-X FILM

The Terror of War was likely taken using Kodak Tri-X 400 high-speed film. Tri-X was introduced during the latter years of the Second World War and revolutionised photography, allowing photojournalists to take good-quality black and white images in difficult conditions.



The photo was initially rejected for publication due to Phúc's nudity

CENSORED

In 2016 the photograph once again became the subject of controversy when Facebook deleted a post by the Norwegian writer Tom Egeland which used the image. After widespread protests, Facebook reversed its decision.

All images: © Alamy, © Shutterstock

VIETNAM WAR KEY PLAYERS

These ten individuals helped shape one of the most controversial conflicts of the 20th century

Jane Fonda

American

21 Dec 1937 – present

The star of films such as *Barbarella* (1968) and *Klute* (1971) was a key figure in the anti-war movement. Fonda was vocal about her opposition to the war and gained notoriety in July 1972 when she visited Hanoi in North Vietnam. During her tour a photograph was taken of her seated astride a North Vietnamese anti-aircraft gun. She also made several radio broadcasts criticising American involvement in Vietnam. Her trip caused anger among US troops and earned her the nickname 'Hanoi Jane' - badges were even printed which read: "I'm not Fond'a Hanoi Jane". She later apologised for the controversial photograph.

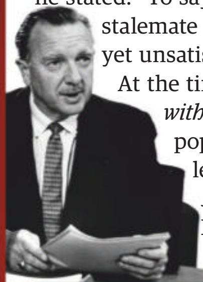
In the early 1970s Fonda and her *Klute* co-star Donald Sutherland appeared in the *FTA Show*, an anti-war cabaret that toured US military bases.

WALTER CRONKITE

AMERICAN, 4 NOV 1916 – 17 JULY 2009

Cronkite was an American journalist, anchorman and pioneer of television news. In 1968, during his coverage of the surprise Tet Offensive against US forces, he stated: "To say that we are mired in stalemate seems the only realistic, yet unsatisfactory, conclusion."

At the time, CBS's *Evening News with Walter Cronkite* was so popular that his remarks led President Lyndon B Johnson to observe: "If I've lost Cronkite, I've lost Middle America."



JOHN F KENNEDY

AMERICAN, 29 MAY 1917 – 22 NOV 1963

During his relatively short time in office, President Kennedy increased aid and assistance to South Vietnam. Under his authority, 16,000 advisors helped assist the South and the coup that overthrew Ngo Dinh Diem was arranged. But he was reluctant to send US troops to fight in the conflict. On 22 November 1963, Kennedy was shot dead. It's unclear if he would have continued US involvement to the extent of his successor Lyndon B Johnson.

HENRY KISSINGER

GERMAN-AMERICAN, 27 MAY 1923 – 29 NOV 2023

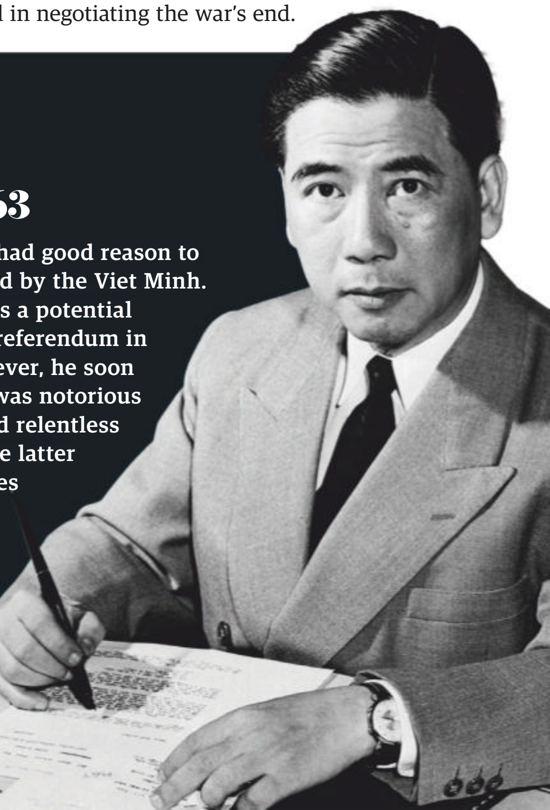
Born in Germany in 1923, Kissinger emigrated with his family to the United States in 1938. One of many Jewish refugees who fled Nazi Germany, Kissinger became a US citizen in 1943 and attended Harvard University. He authored a number of books on foreign policy and was a key advisor to the US government during the Vietnam War. Although initially in favour of American involvement, he later changed his mind and was instrumental in negotiating the war's end.

Ngo Dinh Diem

Vietnamese

3 Jan 1901 – 2 Nov 1963

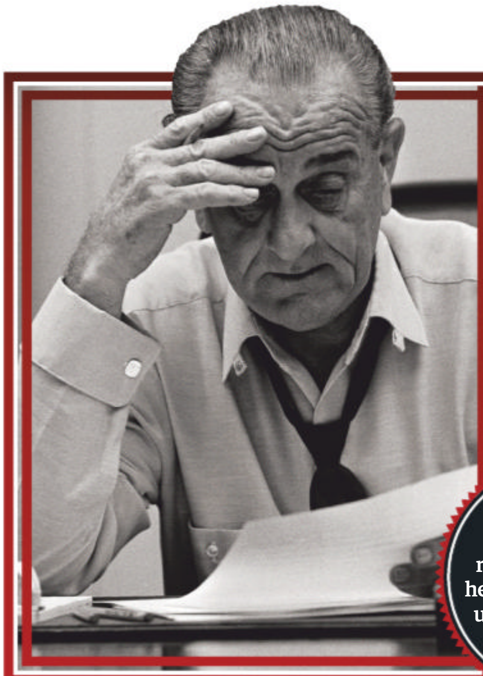
Strictly anti-communist, Ngo Dinh Diem had good reason to be - his father and brother had been killed by the Viet Minh. Dinh was favoured by the United States as a potential leader for the South, and after a (rigged) referendum in 1954 he declared himself president. However, he soon became hated by his people. His regime was notorious for its corruption, dictatorial methods and relentless persecution of Vietnamese Buddhists. The latter was the most damaging, leading to a series of highly publicised suicide protests. On 2 November 1963, Diem and his brother were killed during a coup d'etat, an operation that was assisted by the United States government.



HANOI HANNAH

VIETNAMESE, 1931 – 30 SEP 2016

Throughout the course of the war, Trinh Thi Ngo was the voice of North Vietnam's propaganda operations, aimed at destroying morale among the US troops. Speaking perfect English, she was nicknamed 'Hanoi Hannah' and spread false or exaggerated news during broadcasts, which also included popular Western music. She targeted some broadcasts towards African American soldiers, highlighting the racism they faced.



Lyndon B Johnson

American

27 Aug 1908 – 22 Jan 1973

Following the assassination of John F Kennedy, Lyndon B Johnson was named his successor. Throughout his years in office he gradually increased US involvement in the conflict, particularly after the 1964 Gulf of Tonkin incident. That same year Johnson won the presidential election and, despite having campaigned on the notion of 'peace with honour', US troops entered Vietnam for the first time in 1965. By the time of the next election in 1968, 540,000 troops were already stationed there. So unpopular was this decision with the public that Johnson chose not to seek re-election.

Johnson was rumoured to have held meetings while using the lavatory.

Ho Chi Minh

Vietnamese

19 May 1890 - 2 Sep 1969

Ho Chi Minh was born in French-occupied Vietnam. As a young man he had already campaigned for equal rights for Vietnamese citizens when the Bolshevik revolution inspired him to pursue communism. In 1923 he visited Moscow and six years later he founded the Indochinese Communist Party. Over subsequent years he continued to push for independence while remaining in exile. At the end of the Second World War he led the Viet Minh in the First Indochina War, finally defeating Vietnam's French colonial rulers. He died six years before his country was unified.

Visitors to the Ho Chi Minh mausoleum can see the president's preserved body in a glass sarcophagus.

VO NGUYEN GIAP

VIETNAMESE, 25 AUG 1911 – 4 OCT 2013

Giap was arguably North Vietnam's most important military leader. He led the Viet Minh to victory against the French at the Battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954, an impressive feat considering he had almost no professional military training. He was integral to the North's strategy during the Vietnam War, organising the Tet Offensive in 1968. Giap was a commander who was prepared to suffer substantial losses, but who was ultimately victorious against a much larger foe.

All images: © Alamy, © Getty Images

LE DUAN

VIETNAMESE, 7 APRIL 1907 – 10 JULY 1986

Following the death of Ho Chi Minh, Le Duan became the North Vietnamese leader. He seemed an ideal candidate, having helped form the Indochinese Communist Party alongside Ho Chi Minh and others in 1930. Until 1954, according to his obituary in *The New York Times*, Duan "helped create a party structure in the South that could not be eradicated by the non-communist government." Following the reunification in 1975, Duan assumed control of the entire nation and set about forging the way for the new communist state. He remained ruler until his death in 1986.

THE GLOBAL WAR IN VIETNAM

Sean Fear discusses why the Vietnam War was a global conflict that impacted the wider Cold War

How fair is it to call the Vietnam War a global conflict?

Very fair! Beginning in 1940 with the occupation of French-controlled Indochina by Japanese imperial forces during World War II, Vietnam was subject to a series of military interventions by foreign powers, each welcomed by some Vietnamese nationalist groups and strongly resisted by others.

At various points and to varying degrees, Japan, France, Great Britain, the Chinese Nationalists, the Chinese communists, the United States, the Soviet Union, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, the Philippines, Laos, Australia, New Zealand and Cambodia all committed military forces to the evolving conflict, which arguably came to a conclusive end only in 1989 when Vietnam withdrew its military from neighbouring Cambodia. At its peak during the 1960s and early 1970s, the Vietnam War was omnipresent in global newspapers and television broadcasts, and was the basis for political demonstrations around the world.

That said, in my view the basic essence of the conflict was fundamentally Vietnamese, a clash between rival nationalist groups, communist and anti-communist, over which direction the country should take in the lead-up to independence from France.

Dr Sean Fear lectures at the University of Leeds, specialising in the history of modern Vietnam with a focus on the international aspects of the Vietnam War. Between 2022 and 2023, he was visiting professor at the Fulbright University in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

BELOW
Henry Kissinger meets Mao Zedong in the period of détente following the end of the Vietnam War

Headshot: Photo by Tong Thi Xuyen

How did it fit into the wider context of the Cold War?

The war in Vietnam began as a struggle pitting the Vietnamese communists against a loose coalition of political groups, religious organisations and ethnic minorities, united only by their fear and aversion to the prospect of authoritarian communist rule. But even before Vietnam secured independence in 1954 after a long war against France, the conflict had come to be regarded in Washington, Beijing and Moscow as an important theatre in the global Cold War.

By framing the war as part of a global crusade against communism – as opposed to a war of colonial domination – France and its Vietnamese allies succeeded in enlisting American support, which began in earnest in 1949. Before long, the United States was funding some 80 percent of the French war effort against Ho Chi Minh's communists, who were in turn overwhelmingly dependent on supplies from Mao Zedong's communist China. After 1954, when the Vietnamese communists won independence from France, Vietnam was divided between two soon-to-be warring states: a communist North, backed by China and later the Soviet Union; and a non-communist authoritarian government in the South, increasingly sustained by military and economic aid from the United States. In short, both North Vietnam and South Vietnam relied upon assistance from rival Cold War superpowers.

Then, in 1965, worried that South Vietnam was on the verge of collapse, the United States launched a massive military intervention to stem the tide of communist momentum. The Vietnam War was now the Cold War's 'hottest' conflict, regarded around the world as symbolic of the broader Cold War.

Were there ever concerns that the Soviet Union or communist China would send troops to support North Vietnam?

Fear that the Vietnam War might escalate into direct combat against the Soviet Union and in particular China was an important constraint on American intervention in Vietnam. The United States ruled out deploying ground troops and even nuclear strikes against Hanoi because the risk of a Chinese response against the United States was significant. A few fringe historians argue that the United States erred by not invading North Vietnam directly, but we know now from Chinese archives that Mao Zedong really was prepared to launch a war against the United States under these circumstances.

We've also since learned that the Soviet Union and especially China did deploy troops to the conflict, albeit as military advisors and technical specialists rather than combat-ready soldiers. By the 1960s, some 300,000 Chinese military personnel were stationed in North Vietnam where, among other things, they helped their Vietnamese counterparts in repairing the damage caused by American bombs.

How did the conflict immediately impact the rest of Southeast Asia?

The Vietnam War had a ripple effect on East and Southeast Asia, an important if overlooked outcome of the conflict. Largely led by authoritarian military governments, Vietnam's neighbours for the most part backed the United States. They hoped to secure lucrative American aid, and were alarmed that domestic critics might be inspired by the Vietnamese communists to take up arms against the state. South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand and the Philippines all deployed troops to the Vietnam War, and their expenses were almost entirely covered by the United States.

The economic impact of the Vietnam War for the region was profound: Thailand's famous tourism industry, for instance, developed first as a destination for American soldiers on leave from Vietnam, while household South Korean firms – Hyundai, Daewoo and Hanjin among others – flourished through American military contracts. The Vietnam War arguably functioned as an equivalent to the Marshall Plan for Southeast Asia. And the United States can ultimately claim to have won the war for Southeast Asia even as it lost the battle for Vietnam, albeit by strengthening military governments which brutally repressed their citizens.

What was the legacy of the USA's failure in Vietnam on the remaining years of the Cold war?

Unexpectedly, perhaps, given the devastating violence it unleashed, the Vietnam War had a limited impact on the broader Cold War. Initially, the conflict was one of several factors prompting the United States to improve relations with China and the Soviet Union, a process known as 'détente'. But détente proved short-lived, with US President Ronald Reagan soon resuming a confrontational approach against the Soviets. We also now know that, behind the scenes, hostility within the communist bloc between China and the Soviet Union was more intense than either country's rivalry with the United States. Navigating the Sino-Soviet split was no easy feat for North Vietnamese diplomats, but it ultimately enabled Hanoi to maximise foreign assistance by playing the two communist superpowers against each other.

In my view, it is in the realm of domestic politics rather than foreign affairs where the Vietnam War has had more lasting consequences for the United States. Intervention in Vietnam engendered an acrimonious and protracted divide within the United States, an important contributing factor towards America's polarisation into so-called 'Red' and 'Blue' states.

THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM, 1955–1975 VIETNAMESE PERSPECTIVES ON NATION BUILDING
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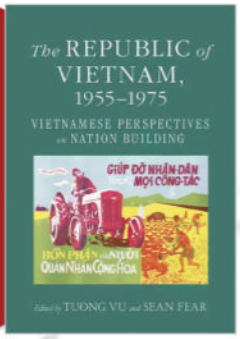
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> *"By the 1960s, some 300,000 Chinese military personnel were stationed in North Vietnam"*

The Soviet Union provided North Vietnam with weapons such as this surface-to-air missile system

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Places to Explore

VIETNAM'S WAR EXPERIENCE

Learn what life was like during the conflict

There's a great deal to visit and enjoy in Hanoi

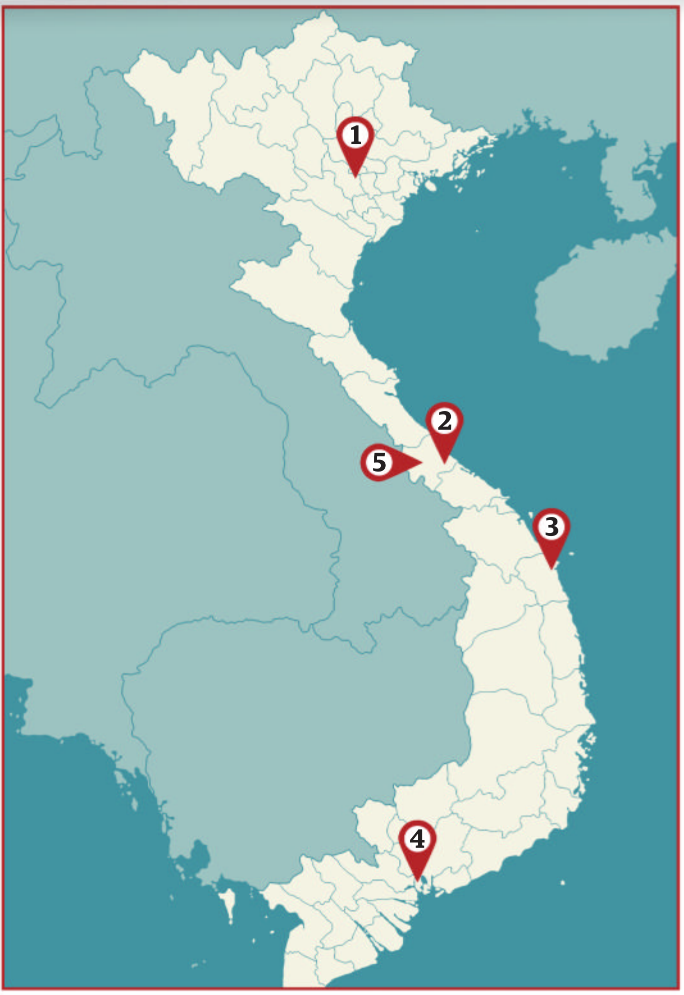
1 HANOI

RED RIVER DELTA

The modern capital of Vietnam was also the capital of North Vietnam during the war and there's plenty to see and learn about the conflict in the city. Sitting on the bank of the Red River, Hanoi has a history stretching back into antiquity with evidence of ancient settlement. It was also chosen as the capital of Ly dynasty ruler Ly Thai To in 1010, when it was called Thang Long (Rising Dragon).

Important sites to visit in Hanoi from the Vietnam War include the Hoa Lo Prison, known by American POWs as the 'Hanoi Hilton'. Today it is used as a museum that focuses on the story of Vietnam leading up to the conflict, particularly its years under French occupation. There are also exhibits relating to some famous American prisoners, including the late Senator John McCain.

Hanoi is also where you'll find the mausoleum of Ho Chi Minh, the North Vietnamese leader. The structure sits in Ba Dinh Square where he used to hold rallies and was constructed between 1973-75. Despite his wishes to be cremated, the preserved body of Ho Chi Minh resides inside.



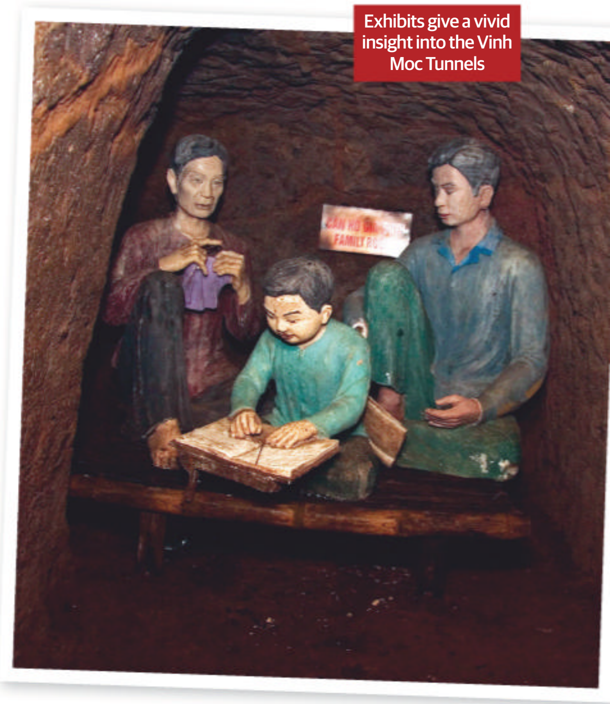
2 QUANG TRI

NORTH CENTRAL COAST

Quang Tri was the most heavily bombed region in the country and saw some of the fiercest fighting of the entire Vietnam War. Some of the scars of those turbulent years have been left to stand, making it a kind of 'living museum' to the conflict. A first stop in Quang Tri might be the Demilitarised Zone, for instance, which came into effect in 1954 after an armistice agreement was signed between North Vietnam and the French. This subsequently made it the frontline of the following conflict between north and south.

You will also find the Khe San Combat Base here, built by the US military to stop the northern forces from advancing south. It was the site of a deadly siege in 1968 that resulted in heavy casualties on both sides. A small museum now uses the space as well as some coffee growers.

You can also view the Vinh Moc Tunnels, which were hand-built from 1965 and used as a shelter and supply base during the war. Opened to the public in 1995, there are about 2,000 metres of tunnels to explore.



Exhibits give a vivid insight into the Vinh Moc Tunnels

All images: © Getty Images

The My Lai Massacre memorial is a powerful sight

3 QUANG NGÃI

SOUTH CENTRAL COAST

There's a captivating combination of natural beauty and history to be found in Quang Ngai, which was once an important port town for the Champa Kingdom (c.2nd century CE – 1832). Of particular interest will be the Cù Lao Ré volcanic islands off the coast from the city and the 'Great Wall of Vietnam', thought to have been built in 1819. It's also where you'll find the Son My Vestige Site, also known as the My Lai Memorial, which commemorates the victims of the My Lai massacre by US troops that occurred on 16 March 1968.

My Lai was a hamlet attached to Son My village, about 11km from Quang Ngai. Charlie Company had been tasked with locating and destroying the Viet Cong 48th Battalion thought to be operating in the heavily mined and boobytrapped area. Faulty intelligence told them the enemy was in My Lai and they opened fire on unarmed civilians, killing more than 500 people. The modern memorial lists 504 names for the victims, with a museum offering further details about the subsequent investigations and testimony.

4 HO CHI MINH CITY

SOUTHEAST

Formerly known as Saigon, this was the capital of the South Vietnamese during the war and is a hugely significant city. Even today it remains the largest city in the country, with a population approaching 10 million. Ho Chi Minh is a bustling, busy location full of all of the culture, food and entertainment you would expect. There's also no shortage of history to be found. You can start with the Cu Chi tunnels, where you can see first-hand how this tiny underground network was used to bring Viet Cong fighters deep into South Vietnam.

You can also visit the War Remnants Museum, which is dedicated to chronicling evidence of war crimes and their aftermath in Vietnam, broken down into nine permanent exhibits. It's the most comprehensive accounting of the Vietnamese perspective of the Vietnam War you could wish to find.

And no visit would be complete without the Independence Palace (also called the Reunification Palace). This was the residence and office of the president of South Vietnam during the war, built in 1966 to replace the damaged Norodom Palace, originally constructed by the French in 1868.

The War Remnants Museum displays several aircraft

BẢO TÀNG CHỨNG TÍCH CHIẾN TRANH
WAR REMNANTS MUSEUM

A monument to the trail can be found on Dakrong Bridge

5 HO CHI MINH TRAIL

HANOI TO HOI AN

More adventurous travellers might consider following the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Historically, the trail was a vast network of paths and narrow dirt roads that allowed North Vietnam to bypass patrols and gain access to South Vietnam, starting in 1959 when efforts to unify the country began. These routes frequently pass into neighbouring Laos and Cambodia. Towards the end of the Vietnam War some of these trails had even added hospitals and fuel depots.

Today there are a number of tourist-friendly routes operating under the banner of the Ho Chi Minh trail that offer guided tours and excursions, often on motorbike and spread out over several days. Some of the routes remain in Vietnam while others cross the borders into neighbouring countries. It's potentially a great way to see a lot of the country, but even if that doesn't appeal, key locations on the trail are signposted and can be visited on their own. A monument to the trail can be found at Dakrong Bridge in Quang Tri.

Ho Chi Minh is named after the revered revolutionary leader

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THE BLACK DEATH

Written by Dr Nick Summerton

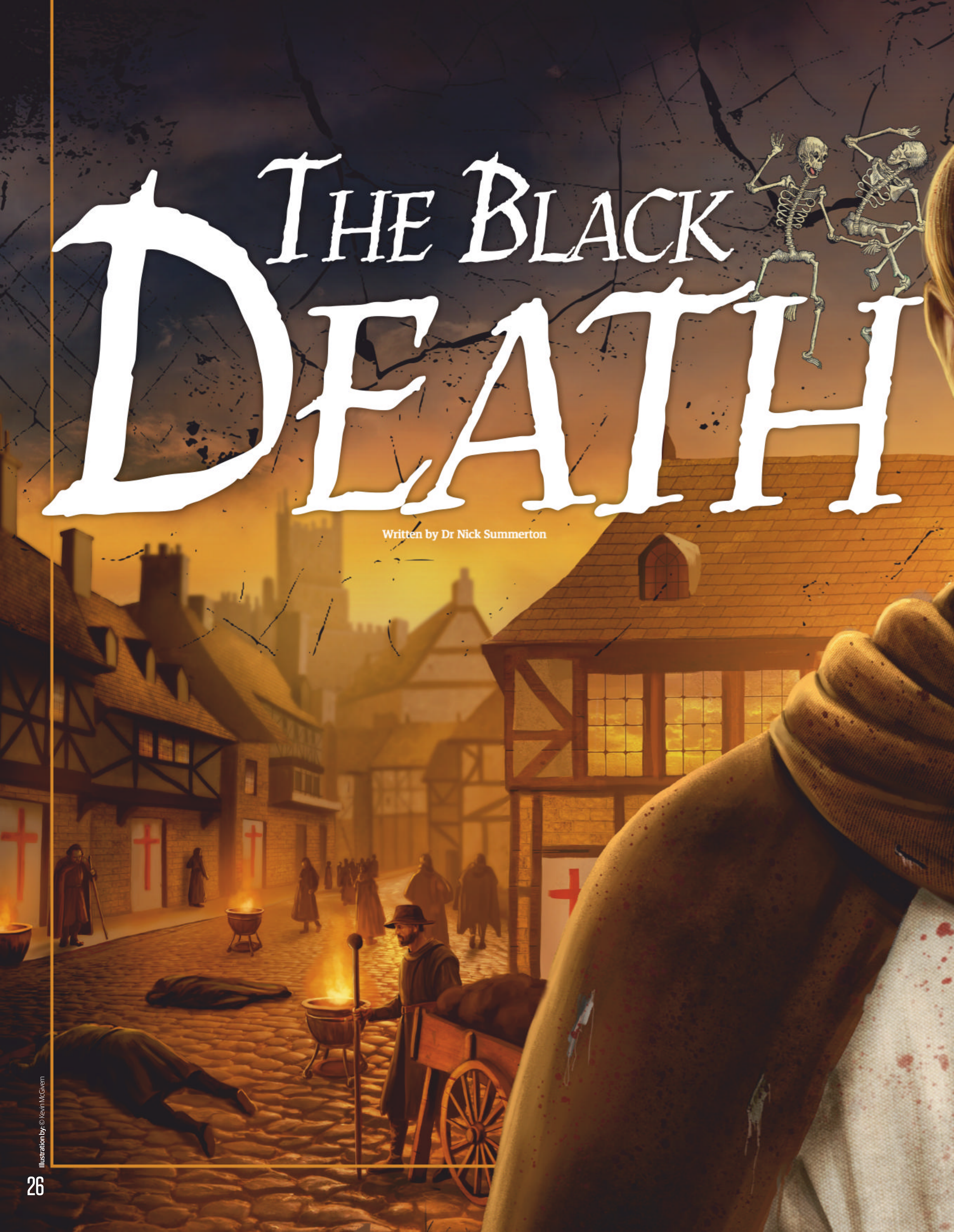

Illustration by: © Kevin McGivern

The Black Death

From miasma to miracles: how medieval medicine desperately battled the bubonic plague

King Edward III had enjoyed an amazing year. His archers had annihilated the French forces at Crécy on 26 August 1346, and the Scottish King David was defeated and captured near Durham in October. The icing on the cake was the surrender of the town of Calais to the besieging English army on 3 August 1347. Undoubtedly there would have been an air of optimism within the English court with a renewed sense of national identity. But a dark cloud was approaching from the east.

Caffa (modern-day Feodosia) was a Genoese colony located on the Black Sea within modern-day Crimea. It was a flourishing trading settlement and port at the interface between Europe and Asia. Although the site had been purchased from the Golden Horde (a division of the former Mongol Empire) in 1266, relations between the Genoese and the Mongols had become increasingly strained. In 1345, Jani Beg, the Mongol ruler, embarked on an aggressive siege of Caffa that deteriorated into a protracted stalemate.

The 14th century Italian lawyer Gabriel de Mussis wrote that the Mongols "besieged the trapped Christians for almost three years… hemmed in by an immense army they could hardly draw breath." But there was a dramatic change in fortunes when the Mongol forces began being ▶

Key Terms

Some helpful definitions when talking about medieval health

Epidemic

An unexpected increase in the number of cases of disease in a specific geographical area.

Pandemic

An epidemic occurring over a very wide area usually affecting a large number of people.

Miasma

'Unclean air' that was thought to be the cause of many illnesses, combated by cleaning streets or breathing in 'clean' smells like herbs and flowers.

Humours

Four substances thought to require balance for good health; yellow bile (liver), black bile (spleen), blood (heart) and phlegm (brain).

Dyskrasia

An overarching term for an imbalance of the humours that would then develop into a specific illness.

Eukrasia

The balance of the humours, resulting in good health.

Theriac

A concoction originally developed in Greece as a treatment for snake bites, but developing into a 'cure-all' drug offered to plague victims.

Yersinia pestis

The bacteria that causes plague, typically infecting animals and then spreading to humans through flea bites.

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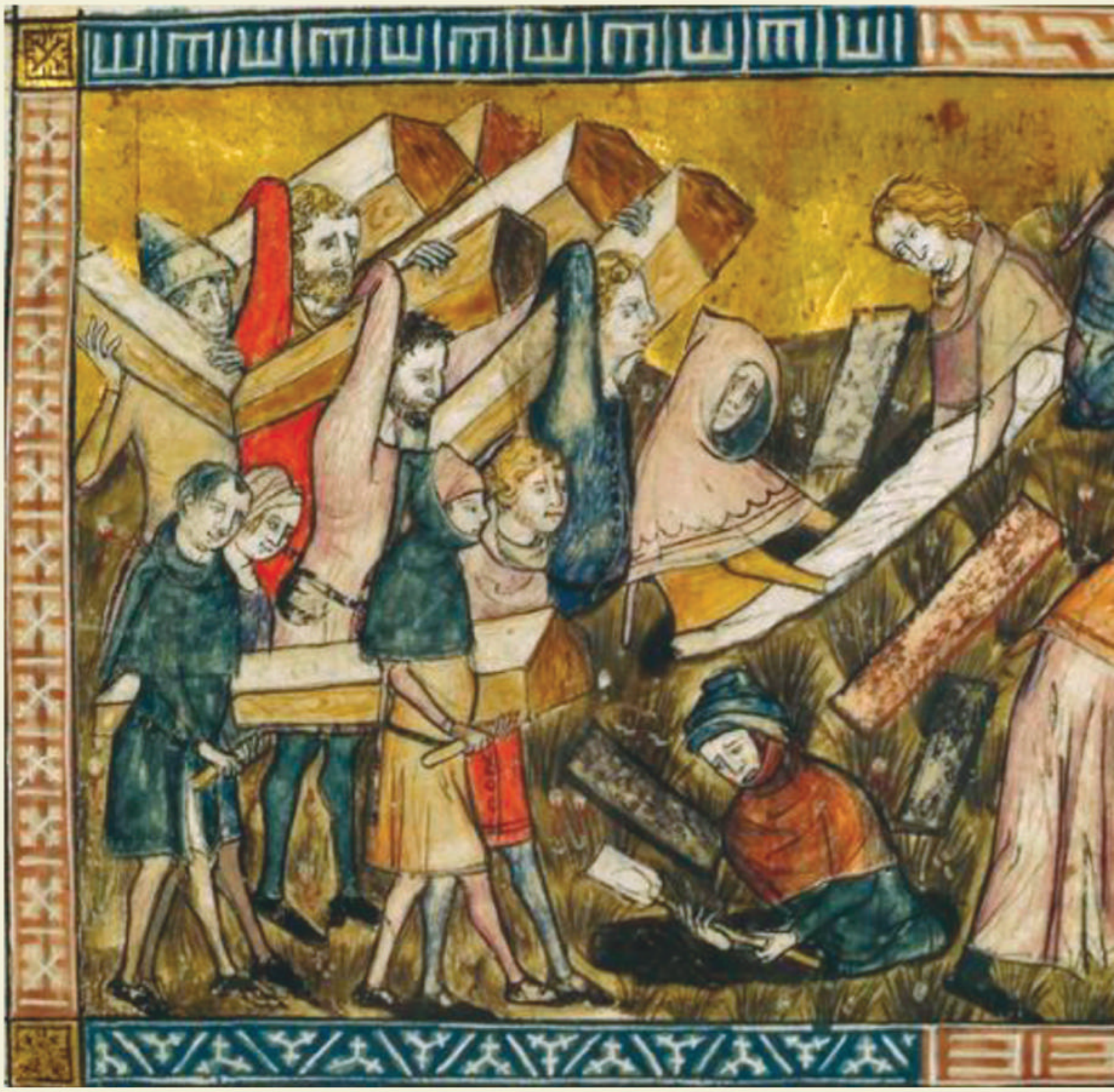


ABOVE This miniature (c.1353) depicts the people of Tournai, Belgium, burying victims of the Black Death

"affected by a disease which… killed thousands upon thousands every day. It was as though arrows were reigning down from heaven to strike and crush the Mongols' arrogance. All medical advice and attention was useless, the Mongols died as soon as the signs of disease appeared… swellings in the armpit or groin… followed by a putrid fever."

Surrounded by piles of rotting corpses, the besieging forces turned to what has been characterised as the earliest example of biological warfare. According to Gabriel de Mussis, dead bodies were placed into catapults and lobbed over the walls of Caffa "in the hope that the intolerable stench would kill everyone inside." Illness and death certainly began to strike down the Genoese defenders and, as the Mongol army withdrew, the Europeans began to flee back to Italy, taking the disease with them.

Over 3,000km away King Edward III was kissing goodbye to his second - and favourite - daughter, Joan. To further enhance his position and credentials, Edward was seeking to build alliances across Europe; the betrothal of Joan to Peter of Castile was part of this. However, en route to meet Peter the royal ship stopped off at Bordeaux. Here East met West as the illness that had left the Black Sea coast had now reached the shores of France. Few in the Royal party survived the encounter, with Joan dying on 2 September 1348.

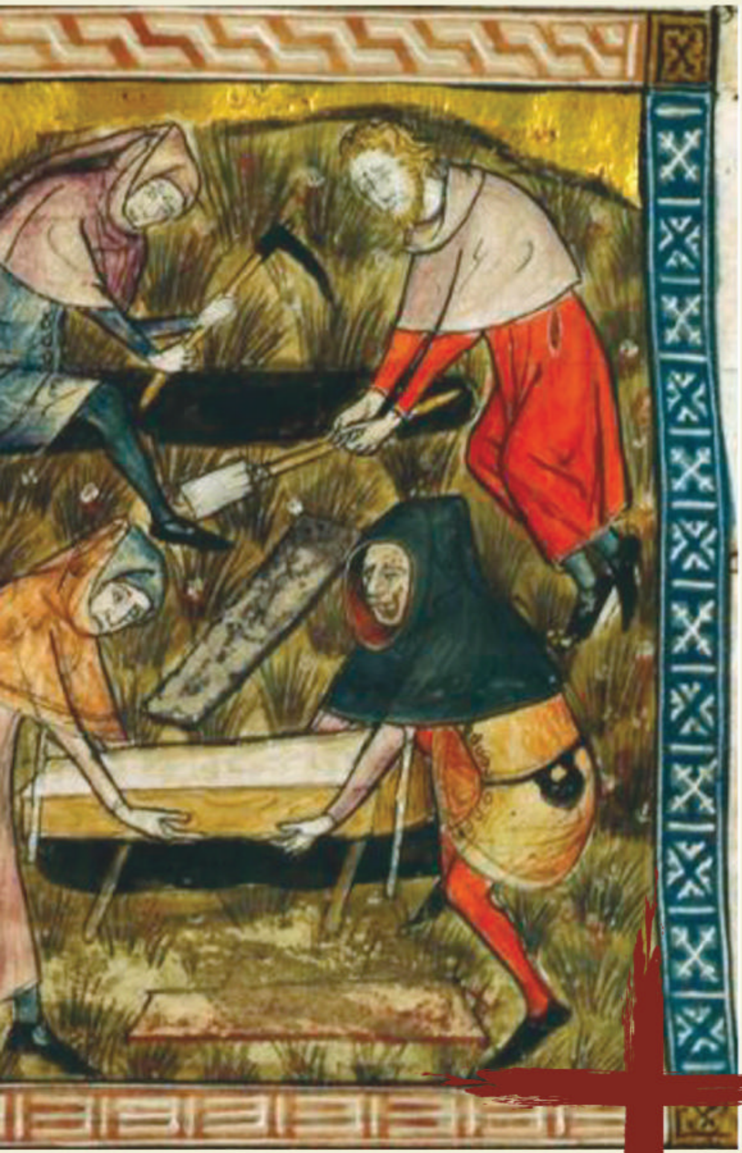
King Edward III later wrote to King Alfonso of Castile (Peter's father): "No fellow human being could be surprised if we were inwardly desolated by the sting of this bitter grief, for we are humans too."

Around the same time that the ill-fated royal party set off for Spain, the disease that had wreaked such devastation in Caffa and across Europe arrived in Weymouth on England's south coast. By autumn it was decimating the population of London, and soon no part of England remained unscathed by the illness that has since come to be known as the Black Death.

The Black Death

Initially terms such as 'the pestilence', 'the great pestilence', 'the plague', 'the great death' and the Latin 'atra mors' were used to describe the illness that struck Europe between 1346 and 1353, killing between one-third and half of the

BELOW The plague was spread from rats to humans by fleas such as this



> "This 14th century plague became legendary due to its broad spread"

population. As the centuries passed this 14th century plague became legendary due to its broad spread combined with the high death count and was dubbed the 'Black Death' by the historian Elizabeth Penrose in 1823. In modern terms it has been labelled as a pandemic.

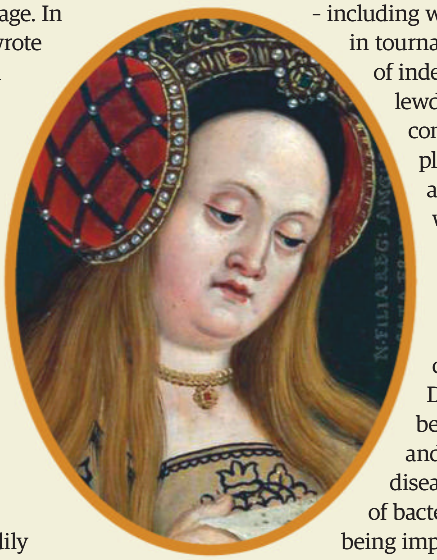
Unfortunately, the term Black Death doesn't really give us a sense of the horrific nature of the plague and might have arisen from a misunderstanding of the phrase 'atra mors'. Mors means death whereas atra can be translated in a variety of ways including black, unlucky, deadly or terrible. The Roman dramatist Seneca the Younger first described a plague as 'atra mors' in his first-century play *Oedipus* to emphasise its destructive effects.

According to the historian Ole Benedictow the term Black Death also had nothing to do with the clinical symptoms that patients experienced.

What caused the Black Death?

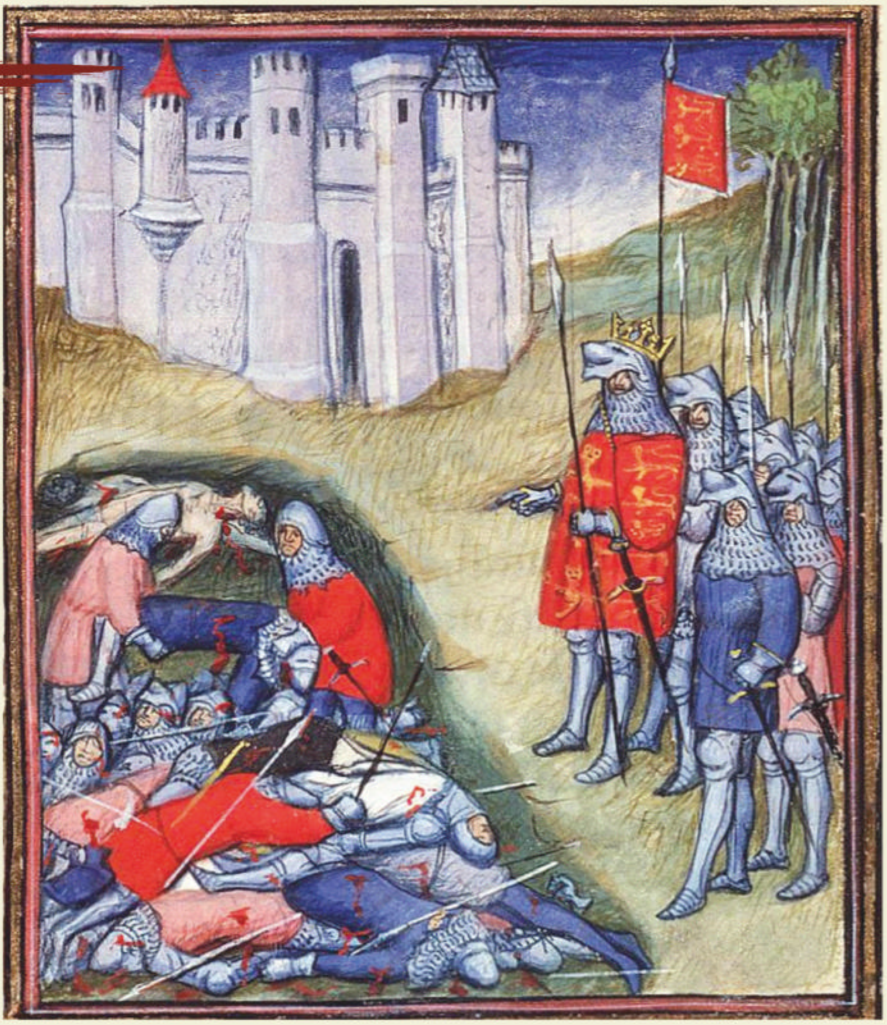
Some argued that the Black Death was caused by bad air (miasma) from rotting organic matter and sewage. In 1349, Edward III even wrote to the mayor of London complaining about the filthy environment poisoning the city air. Earthquakes and volcanoes were thought to contribute further to the pollution by releasing noxious vapours.

Since the time of the ancient Greeks, it had also been considered that individual health relied on the correct blending and balance of four bodily fluids, or humours: phlegm, black bile, yellow bile and blood. All diseases – including plagues – were said to be caused by a disruption to the humoral mixture – termed dyskrasia.



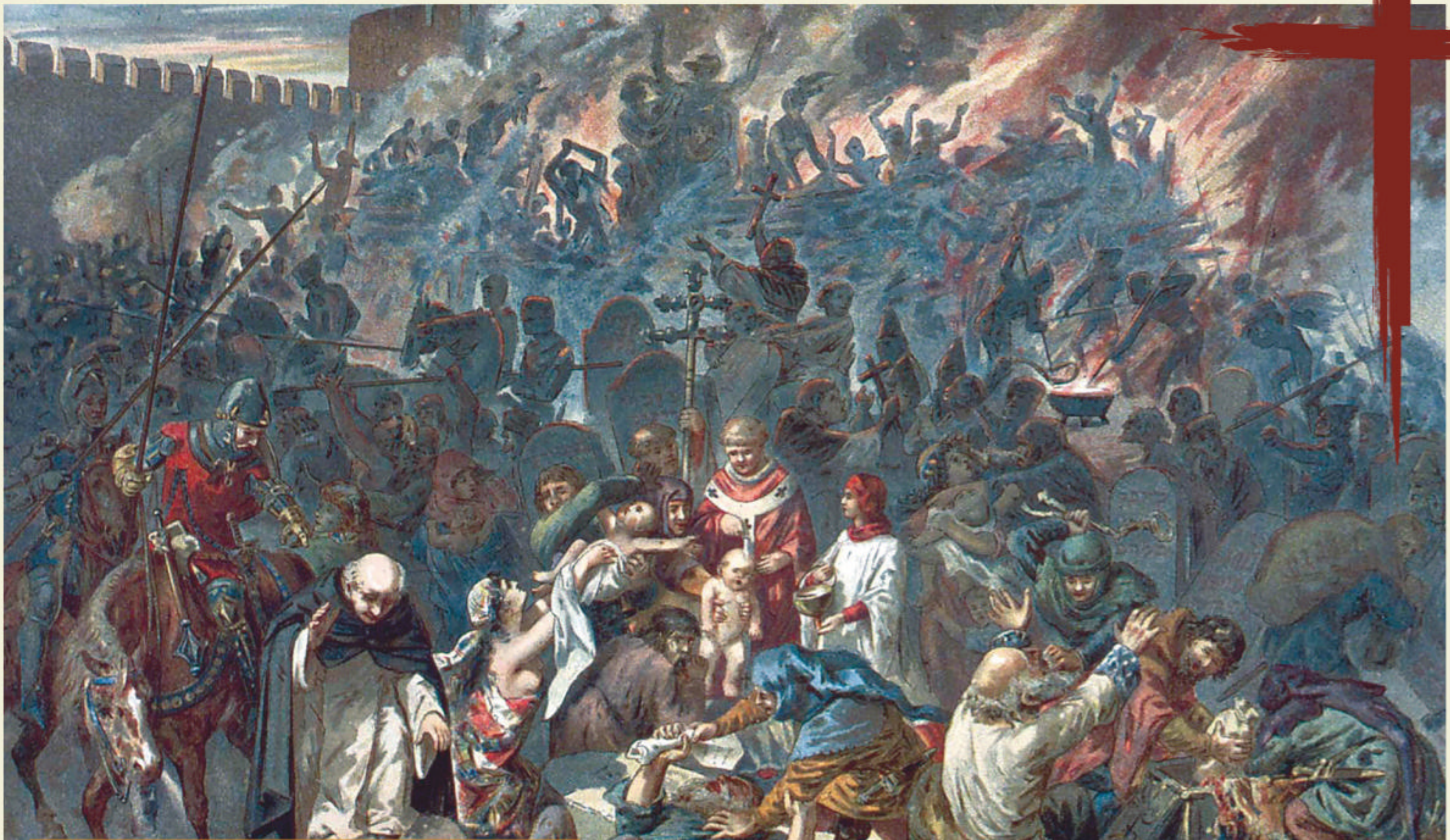
However, the most prevalent view across 14th century Europe was that the Black Death was a punishment from God for a variety of human sins – including women participating in tournaments, the wearing of indecent clothing and lewd behaviours. The conjugation of the planets Jupiter, Saturn and Mars in 1345 was also viewed as a harbinger of a disaster involving sickness and plague.

Nowadays we consider the Black Death to have been an infectious and communicable disease with a variety of bacteria and viruses being implicated: Yersinia pestis, Bacillus anthracis (Anthrax) or an Ebola-like virus. Using modern medical knowledge to make a diagnosis of a past illness can be challenging due to, for example, different descriptions



ABOVE-INSET Joan of England, daughter of Edward III, died from the plague in 1348

RIGHT King Edward III counting the dead at the Battle of Crecy



ABOVE Pogroms against Jews, such as this one in Strasbourg in 1349, were sadly common

ABOVE-INSET What remains of the walls of Caffa, in Crimea

All images: © AdobeStock, © Alamy, © Getty Images

and classifications of historical diseases compounded by evolutionary changes in the genetic materials (DNA and RNA) within bacteria and viruses.

Over recent years advances in DNA technology have been enormously helpful in confirming that the Black Death was caused by an ancestor of our modern-day bacterium Yersinia pestis that still causes bubonic and pneumonic plague. The ancient Yersinia pestis genome extracted from bone and dental remnants of people who died from the Black Death – such as those unearthed from the East Smithfields plague pit in London – is remarkably similar to the modern form.

However, for the Black Death to take hold and spread, two other ingredients are needed in addition to Yersinia pestis: black rats and oriental rat fleas (Xenopsylla cheopis). A successful epidemic also required the outside temperature to be between 10°C and 30°C, enabling the fleas to reproduce.

An oriental rat flea, living on a rat's fur, first acquired Yersinia pestis by sucking blood from an infected host such as another black rat dying from the Black Death. However, once the flea had swallowed a meal of tainted blood the bacteria rapidly multiplied, forming a biofilm that blocked the insect's midgut. The constipated flea then regurgitated infected matter into other rats or humans as it sought to feed from them. Eventually the starving and ravenously hungry flea started frantically biting – and infecting – every warm-blooded mammal it encountered.

Although most black rats died from the Black Death, some acquired resistance, enabling Yersinia pestis to be spread further into uninfected rats and humans by new fleas. The immune rats also enhanced their own chances of survival by feeding on dead and dying rats.

> *"It's important to appreciate that most medieval portrayals of the Black Death were religious in nature"*

Diagnosing the past

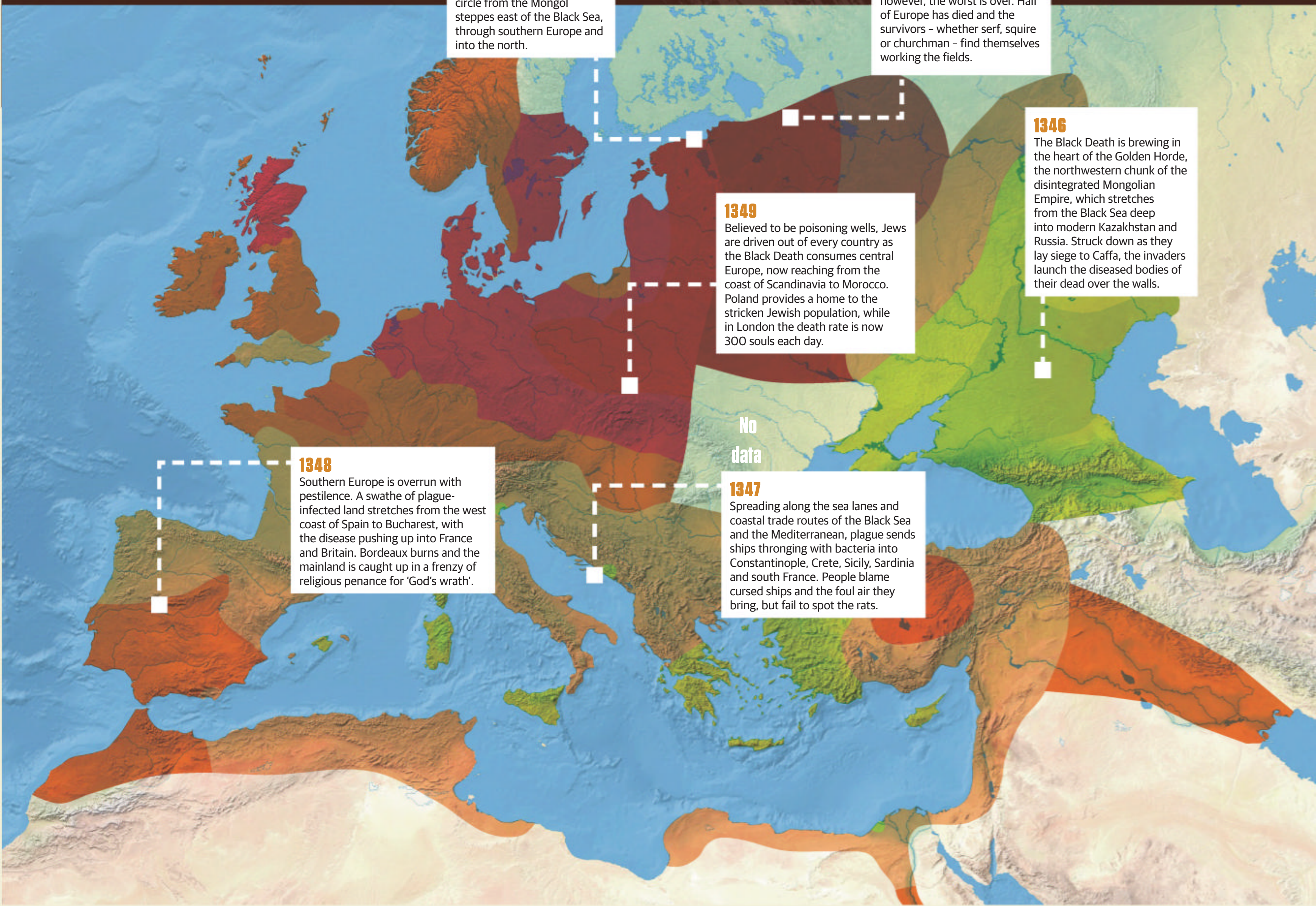
It's important to appreciate that most medieval portrayals of the Black Death were religious in nature, and this can lead to major errors if modern doctors try to use them to make clinical diagnoses. For example, the illustration in the Toggenburg Bible (circa 1411) that commonly appears in today's history books purporting to show patients suffering from the Black Death actually depicts the biblical seventh plague of boils. Other so-called Black Death images probably show patients with various forms of leprosy. Also, many contemporary accounts of clinical features are variable and imprecise.

However, an extract from *The Decameron* by the 14th century Florentine writer Giovanni Boccaccio furnishes us with some helpful clinical information: "Its earliest symptom, in men and women alike, was the appearance of certain swellings in the groin and armpit, some of which were egg-shaped while others were roughly the size of the common apple… Later on, the symptoms of the disease changed, and many people began to find

▶

HOW PLAGUE SWEPT THE CONTINENT

No one was safe from its remorseless spread



1350
The Black Death hits Sweden and completes its clockwise circle from the Mongol steppes east of the Black Sea, through southern Europe and into the north.

1351
The plague sweeps into eastern Europe. By this time, however, the worst is over. Half of Europe has died and the survivors – whether serf, squire or churchman – find themselves working the fields.

1346
The Black Death is brewing in the heart of the Golden Horde, the northwestern chunk of the disintegrated Mongolian Empire, which stretches from the Black Sea deep into modern Kazakhstan and Russia. Struck down as they lay siege to Caffa, the invaders launch the diseased bodies of their dead over the walls.

1349
Believed to be poisoning wells, Jews are driven out of every country as the Black Death consumes central Europe, now reaching from the coast of Scandinavia to Morocco. Poland provides a home to the stricken Jewish population, while in London the death rate is now 300 souls each day.

1348
Southern Europe is overrun with pestilence. A swathe of plague-infected land stretches from the west coast of Spain to Bucharest, with the disease pushing up into France and Britain. Bordeaux burns and the mainland is caught up in a frenzy of religious penance for 'God's wrath'.

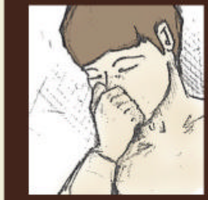
1347
Spreading along the sea lanes and coastal trade routes of the Black Sea and the Mediterranean, plague sends ships thronging with bacteria into Constantinople, Crete, Sicily, Sardinia and south France. People blame cursed ships and the foul air they bring, but fail to spot the rats.

Map source: wiki/ Flappiefh/ CC BY-SA 4.0 - Base map

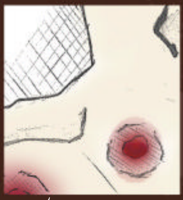
1346 · 1347 · 1348 · 1349 · 1350 · 1351 · 1352 · 1353

STAGES OF THE BLACK DEATH

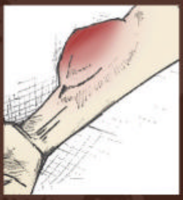
The grim symptoms and results of the Bubonic Plague



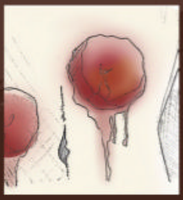
Flu hits
The Black Death begins like a bad cold, with aches, pains, chills and a fever setting in.



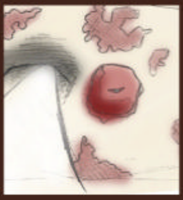
God's tokens
Just a few hours later, circular red rashes begin to appear around infected lymph nodes.



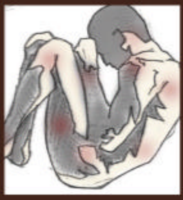
Bubo breakout
Within a day or two, the lymph nodes blacken and swell almost to the size of oranges.



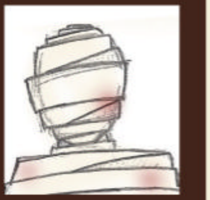
Vomiting
Severe fluid loss, including blood, accompanies and exacerbates all the bloating buboes.



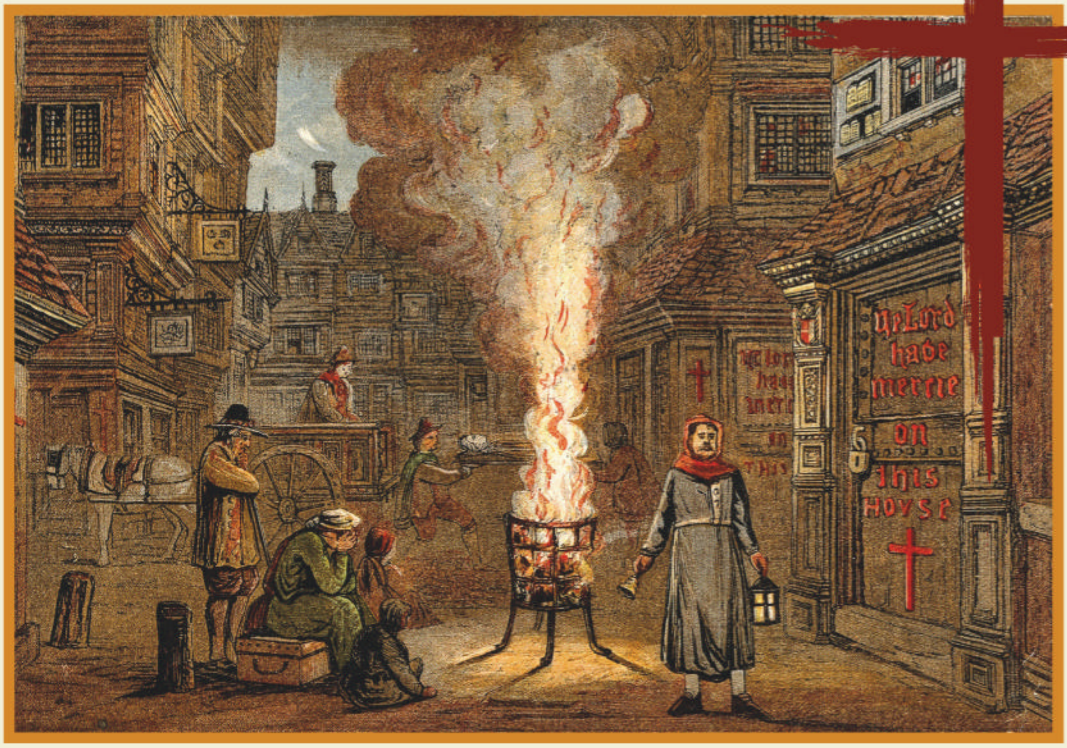
Septic shock
Two to three days after infection, septic shock and pneumonia often hit the victim.



Respiratory failure
Weakened under the assault, the body's central systems begin to shut down.



Death
Usually within two to four days, pestilence conquers the host. Many corpses are simply left in the street.


The Lord have mercie on this house

ABOVE The Great Plague of London (1665-66) killed a quarter of its population

BELOW An outbreak of the Black Death struck Marseille in 1721

dark blotches and bruises on their arms and thighs… Few of those who caught it ever recovered, and in most cases death occurred within three days."

In modern terms this description is consistent with the bubonic form of plague in which an individual develops symptoms two to eight days after being bitten by an infected flea. A second variety of plague – pneumonic – also probably contributed to the high death rate from the Black Death. Pneumonic plague is the most serious type of the disease and is the only form that can be spread from person to person by coughing. It might only take a day for symptoms to show themselves after a person's lungs have been infected by Yersinia pestis.

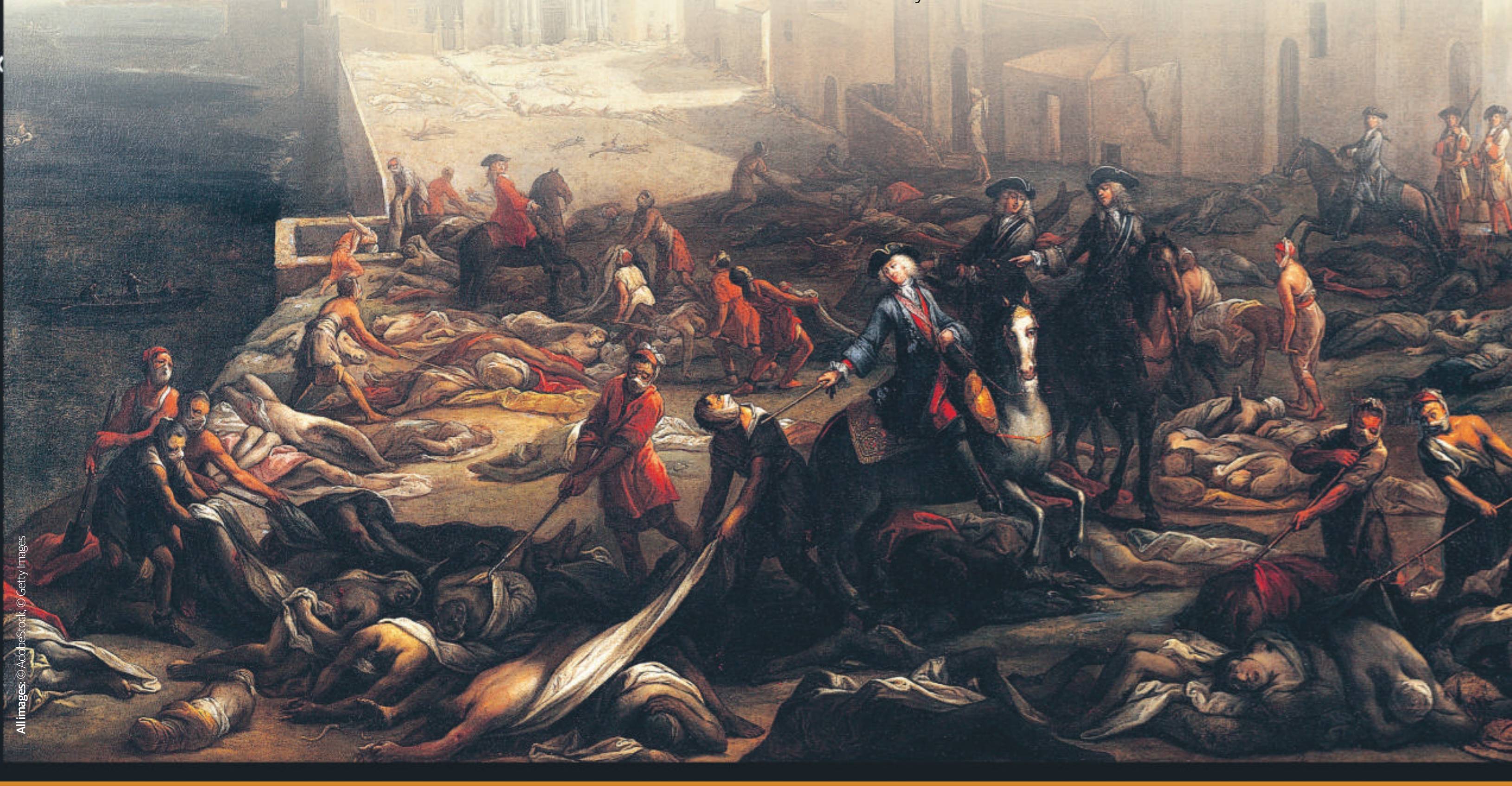
Where did the Black Death come from?

There has been considerable controversy about the precise origin of the Black Death before it reached Caffa. Previously it was assumed that the disease had travelled along the Silk Road routes from the east, but these were all closed by 1343 and never again moved luxury goods into Europe. In 2021 the historian Ole Benedictow suggested an alternative by presenting evidence that the Black Death can be traced back to the lower Volga Delta, from where it could have spread westwards and eastwards.

Following the outbreak in Caffa, galleys – mainly propelled by rowers – would have played a key role in the rapid spread of the Black Death into Europe. Galleys were huge ships that travelled around 85km a day and provided very hospitable environments to colonies of rats and their fleas. By the summer of 1347 the disease had reached Constantinople, and it was then carried in 12 Genoese galleys to Sicily in October 1347, spreading rapidly all over the island. Galleys from Caffa also reached Genoa and Venice in January 1348.

Responses and remedies

Faced with the real prospect of a rapid, horrible death, many people turned to the Church for salvation. King Edward III even instructed the Archbishop of Canterbury to order prayers throughout England. The early Christian saint and martyr Sebastian became venerated as a protector against the plague due to his supposed ability to survive arrows (a metaphor for being struck by the Black Death given the resemblance between buboes and arrow



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"To deal with miasma, individuals were encouraged to surround themselves with pleasant odours"

wounds). Groups of flagellants were also seen across Europe seeking purification from sin and protection from the plague by flogging themselves in public using whips with knotted cords.

As the Black Death was viewed by many as the will of God, some argued that it was wrong for those afflicted to turn to physicians for assistance. Others such as Guy de Chauliac, personal physician to Pope Clement VI, disagreed and bled or purged (for example by inducing vomiting or taking a laxative) patients with a view to rebalancing their four humours. The buboes could also be softened with figs and onions ground up and mixed with yeast and butter. Other physicians advocated cutting open or draining buboes as a cure and, in later outbreaks, the plucked rumps of live chickens or pigeons were applied to the swellings to draw out disease.

Some specific treatments for Black Death (and subsequent outbreaks of plague) included crushed emeralds and theriac. Andromachus the Elder, physician to the Roman Emperor Nero, had developed theriac and by the time of the Black Death it was also known as Venetian Treacle. The remedy was made up of around 70 different ingredients including opium, ginger, saffron, myrrh, viper flesh and cinnamon. Theriac was prescribed for scores of medical problems and, over the centuries, became a remedy for virtually anything, as well as protection against the so-called 'venoms' from poisons, snake bites and plagues.

To deal with miasma, individuals were encouraged to surround themselves with pleasant odours. Indoors this could be achieved by burning spices or juniper; carrying flowers or herbs outside was also supposed to help.

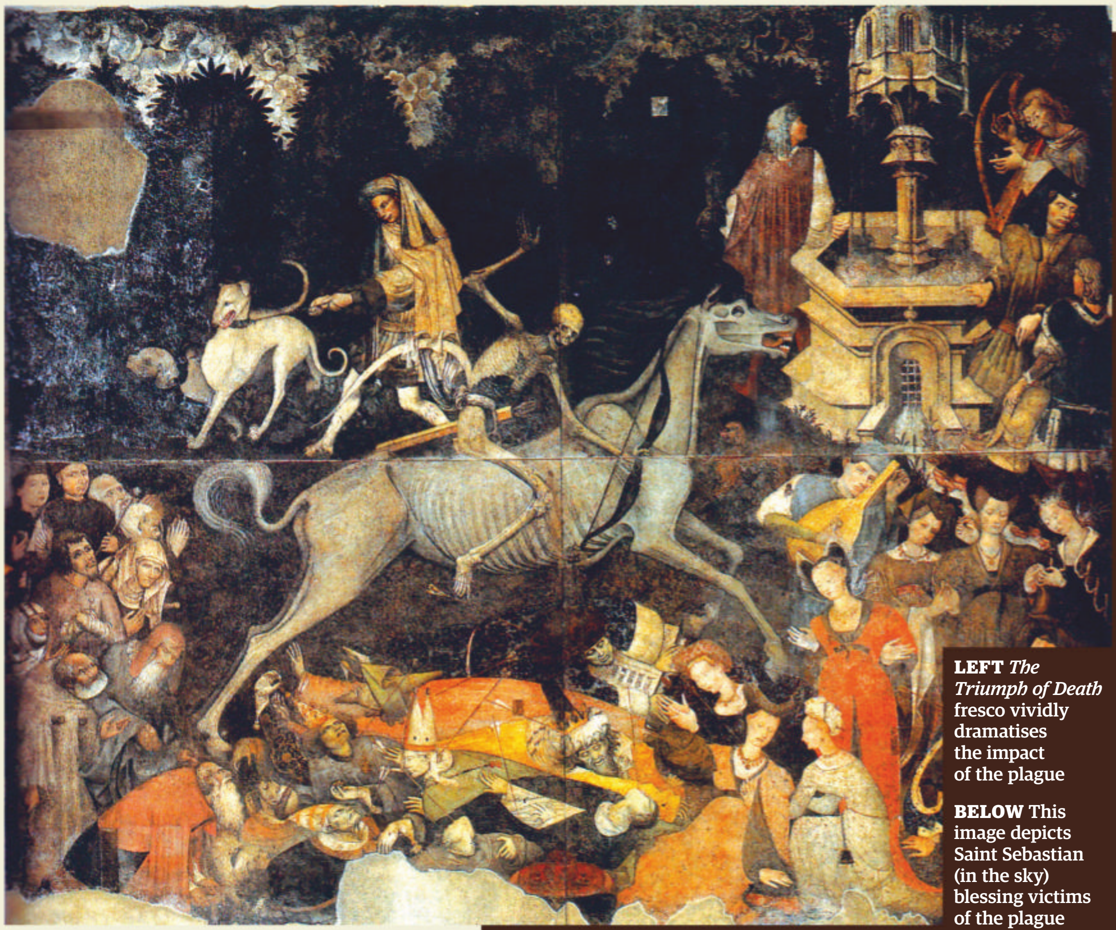
In many places it was thought that plague was linked to the activities of outsiders such as foreigners, travellers and, most commonly, Jews. The subsequent slaughter of thousands of Jews in Toulon, Barcelona, Erfurt, Basel, Frankfurt, Strasbourg and elsewhere across Europe was often associated with false accusations of well poisoning or harbouring enemies of Christ. Lepers, and others with skin diseases such as acne or psoriasis, were killed throughout Europe too.

Some attempts were made by civic authorities to control the flow of people in and out of cities such as Venice in addition to the segregation of individuals suspected of having the plague. The term quarantine originates from the Italian word 'quaranta' relating to the 40-day isolation period that was later applied to ships arriving from plague-infected cities into the Venetian colony of Ragusa (modern-day Dubrovnik).

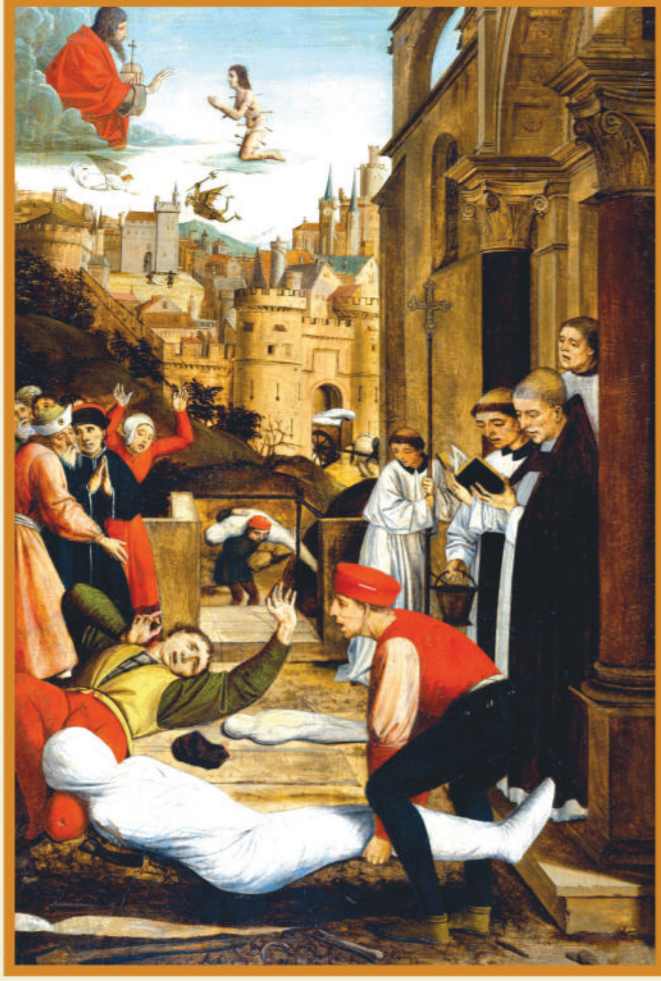
Impacts

Thomas Walsingham, a monk of St Albans Abbey, wrote "in 1349, that is in the 23rd year of the reign of King Edward III, a great mortality of men advanced across the globe... Towns once packed with people were emptied of their inhabitants, and the plague spread so thickly that the living were hardly able to bury the dead. In some religious houses no more than two survived out of twenty... And so much wretchedness followed these ills that afterwards the world could never return to its former state."

In the 14th century the population of England was estimated to be around 6 million, and 2-3 million succumbed to the Black Death. The overwhelming number of fatalities in Europe made mass ▶

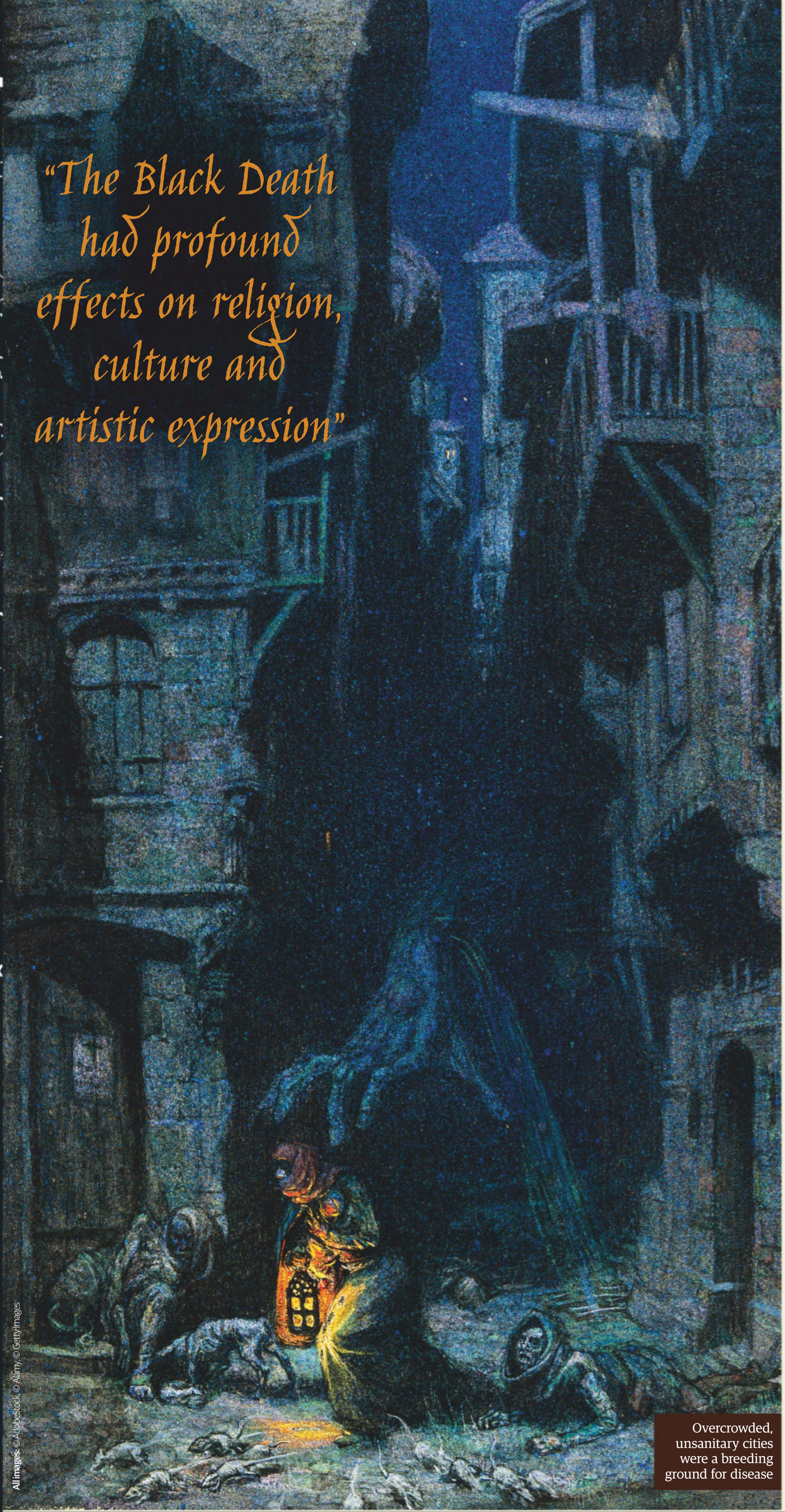


LEFT *The Triumph of Death* fresco vividly dramatises the impact of the plague



BELOW This image depicts Saint Sebastian (in the sky) blessing victims of the plague

> "The Black Death had profound effects on religion, culture and artistic expression"



Overcrowded, unsanitary cities were a breeding ground for disease

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KNOW YOUR PLAGUES

The three most common forms and their symptoms

Bubonic

- Fever
- Headache
- Chills
- Weakness
- One or more swollen, painful lymph nodes (termed buboes)

Septicemic

- Fever
- Chills
- Weakness
- Abdominal pain
- Sometimes bleeding of the skin and organs, extremities turning black

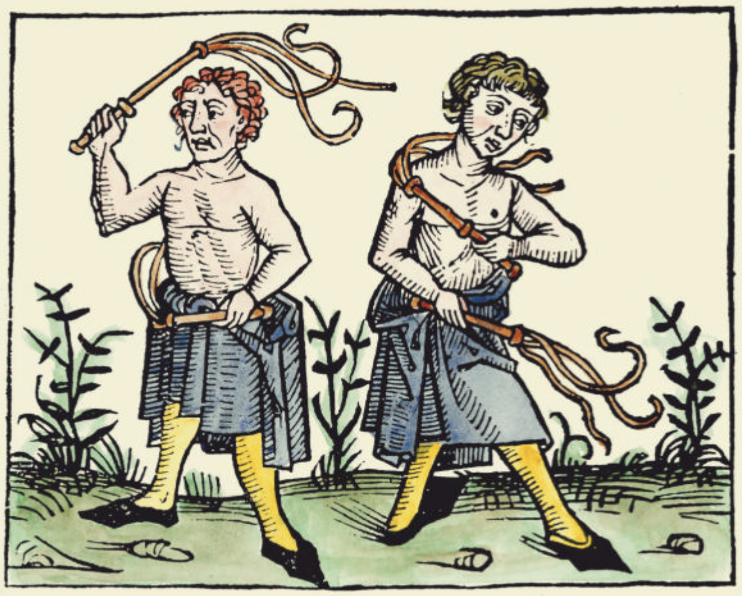
Pneumonic

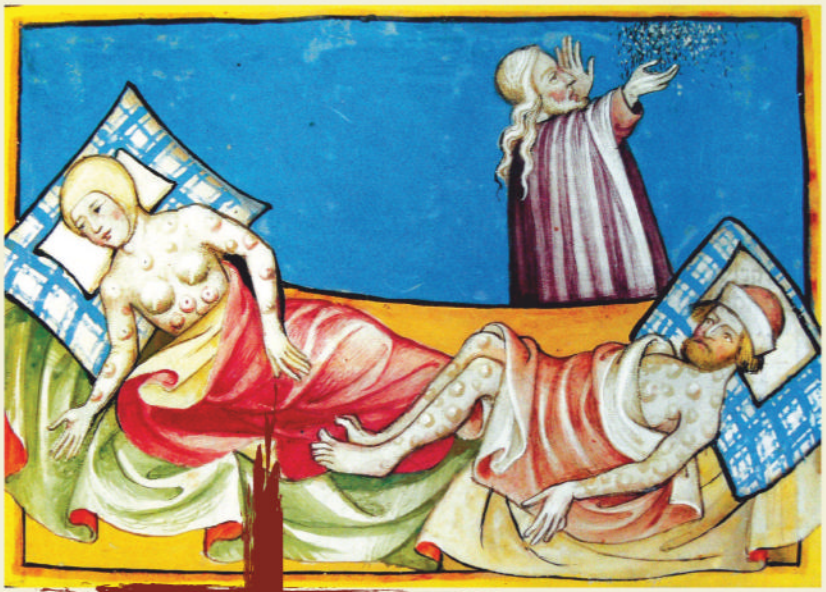
- Fever
- Headache
- Weakness
- Rapidly developing pneumonia with shortness of breath
- Chest pain
- Cough and sometimes bloody or watery mucus

burials necessary, and some sites had hundreds or even thousands of bodies.

To get a sense of the devastation wreaked by the Black Death it's useful to compare it with some modern-day disasters. The geographer Harold Foster developed a scale to summarise the extent of human suffering associated with events such as wars, earthquakes and pandemics. The Second World War comes top with a Foster score of 11.1, third is the First World War (10.5) but, in between, is the Black Death (10.9). The Black Death has also been used as a model for the potential effects of a nuclear war on populations and societies.

Across Europe an immediate effect of the massive loss of life was an acute shortage of farm labourers. There was also significant rural depopulation with some villages – such as Tilgarsley in





ABOVE-LEFT Public repentance, such as self-flagellation, became a common site in Europe in this era

ABOVE-RIGHT This famous depiction of bubonic plague from 1411 tells the story of the plagues of Egypt

Oxfordshire – being completely abandoned. Competition for agricultural labourers pushed up wages, leading to a golden era for poorer agricultural workers who could now rove around the countryside seeking employment. On the other hand, landowners saw their incomes plummet as deceased or absentee peasants now paid no rent or manorial dues. In response Edward III's government brought in the Ordinance of Labourers (1349) and the Statute of Labourers (1351) in a vain attempt to control the situation, but average farm wages in England still doubled between 1350 and 1450.

Another possible consequence of the economic downturn for the likes of squires, yeomen and knights is that they were forced to consider ways to replace their lost agrarian earnings. Participating in Edward III's ongoing war against the French was an obvious opportunity to supplement their incomes from the spoils of war and ransom payments. It has even been suggested that the conflict lasted so long – later being christened the Hundred Years' War – because it was in the economic interests of the aristocracy and the landowning warrior classes.

The population implosion and price inflation also focused minds on ways to increase efficiency and productivity. It has been suggested that the Black Death encouraged greater innovation with the development of new technologies such as the water-powered sawmill. There was also a shift from grain farming to growing cash crops such as apples, pears, hops and flax, as well as rearing sheep. Traditional grain agriculture was very labour-intensive, but sheep farming only required a shepherd, a few dogs and pastureland.

The Black Death had profound effects on religion, culture and artistic expression. The artistic mood became pessimistic, reflecting a fear of death, the fragility of life and a preoccupation with mortality. From the early 15th century, Danse Macabre images depicted skeletons and death-like figures cavorting together. The dancers in the paintings are often of different social classes, emphasising the universality of death irrespective of wealth and status. Religious art also served as a means to seek solace, express faith and grapple with the concept of salvation.

In the late 14th century there was a boom in church building but also changes in their architectural design. There was a shift from the decorated gothic style to the more practical and austere perpendicular gothic form (such as in the chancel of Gloucester Cathedral). This might represent a further example of a cultural transformation across society or, more practically, economic constraints and the loss of skilled workers.

Aftermath

After 1353 – the official end of the Black Death – there was a waning of the plague rather than a complete cessation. The physician to the Avignon Papacy, Raimundo Chalmel de Vinario, observed the decreasing death rates of successive outbreaks. In the first (Black Death), two-thirds of the population contracted the illness and most patients died; in the next (1362), half the population became ill but only some died; by the third (1371), a tenth were affected and many survived; while by the fourth occurrence (1382), only one-in-20 people were sickened and most of them survived. These changes reflect the development of immunity, the effects of various quarantine measures, changes in rat populations, and improvements in sanitation and hygiene together with genetic alterations in Yersinia pestis making it less harmful to humans.

More broadly, the Black Death represents the first occurrence of what is now termed the second plague pandemic caused by Yersinia pestis. The disease quietly smouldered in various places and, like an underground wildfire, could suddenly break out into further epidemics. While the Black Death was the most devastating outbreak, the disease continued to resurface in various regions until the 19th century. The Great Plague of London (1665-66) that killed around a quarter of the city's population was the last flare-up in the UK. The final European epidemics occurred in Malta and Romania between 1813 and 1814, resulting in 64,500 deaths. ○

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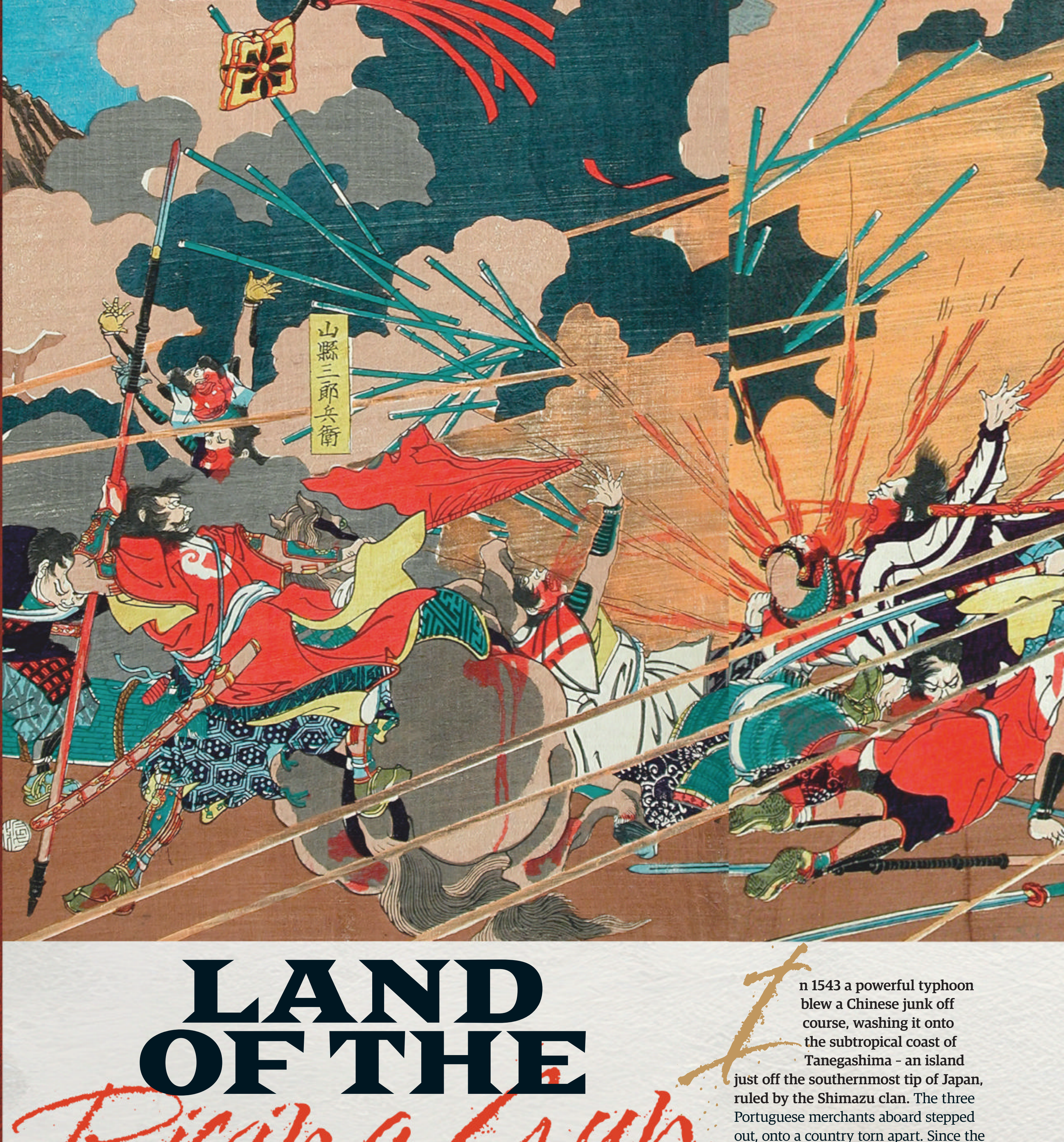
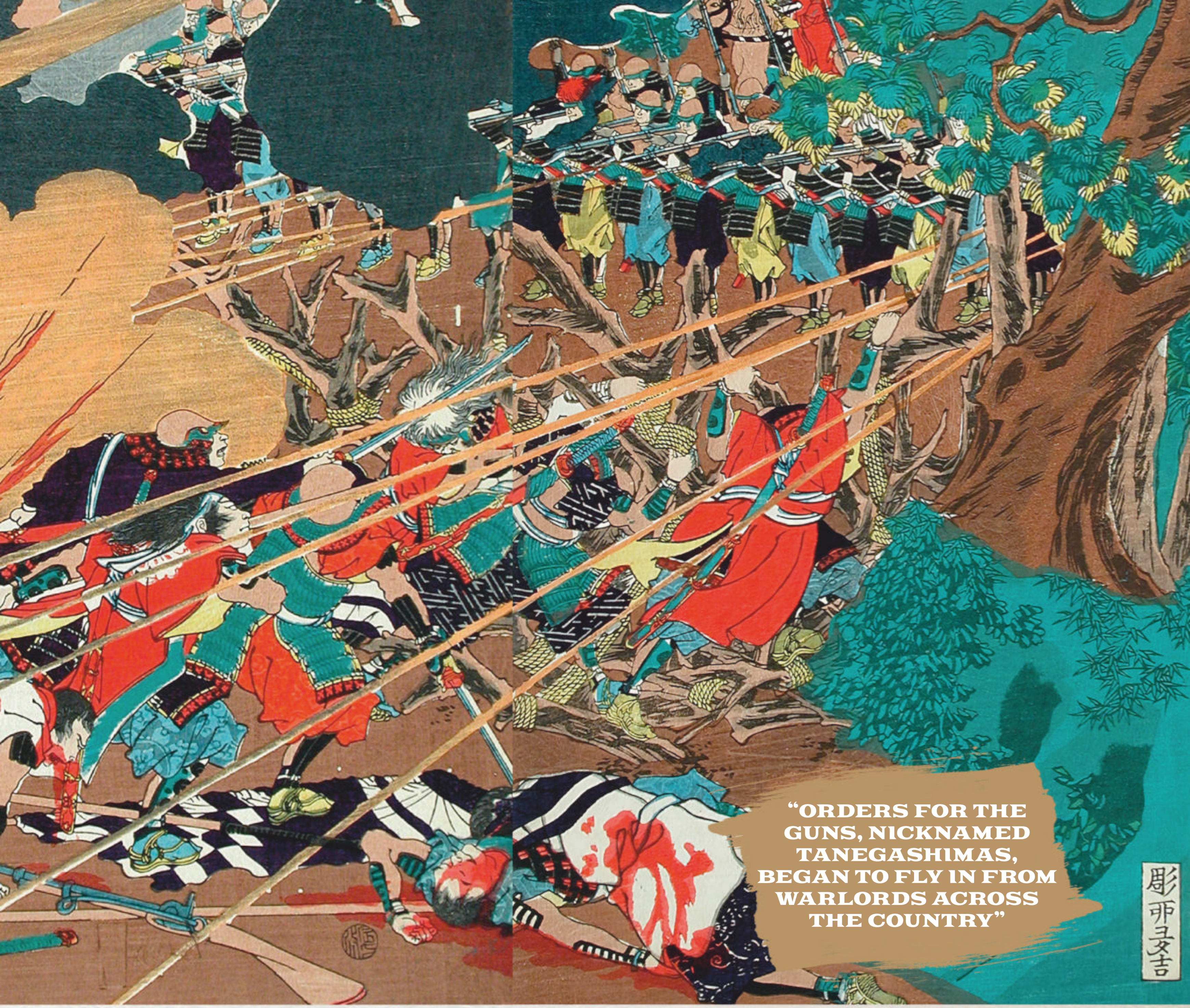


LAND OF THE *Rising Gun*

After decades experimenting with muskets, Oda Nobunaga perfected their use at the Battle of Nagashino, revolutionising not just samurai warfare but Japanese society itself

Written by Hareth Al Bustani

In 1543 a powerful typhoon blew a Chinese junk off course, washing it onto the subtropical coast of Tanegashima – an island just off the southernmost tip of Japan, ruled by the Shimazu clan. The three Portuguese merchants aboard stepped out, onto a country torn apart. Since the 15th century, the Ashikaga shogunate, a military dictatorship that had once held the country together, had collapsed. Though it remained a symbol of authority in the capital of Kyoto, real power was now splintered between regional warlords, slowly expanding their spheres of influence. In this era of chaos the shogunate, and thereby all of Japan, was just waiting to be taken. But first, one would have to emerge supreme.



ABOVE The Battle of Nagashino was a turning point in Japanese history

> “ORDERS FOR THE GUNS, NICKNAMED TANEGASHIMAS, BEGAN TO FLY IN FROM WARLORDS ACROSS THE COUNTRY”

SEEKING AN ADVANTAGE

Being on the very frontier of Japan did not mean the Shimazu could rest easy. They, too, were locked in a deadly war for control over the southern island of Kyushu. The local lord, Shimazu Takahisa, was greatly taken by the unusual-looking Portuguese tradesmen and their novel wares. After exchanging formalities, the merchants treated him to an eye-opening display, firing their long rifles called arquebuses.

The arquebus had established itself as a crucial component in European warfare at the 1503 Battle of Cerignola in Italy. One of the merchants carefully loaded his gun with a ball and gunpowder, before placing priming powder into the flashpan and sealing it with a brass cover to prevent a premature explosion. Then he took a lit match and stuck it in an S-shaped lever, cocking it back against a brass spring. Finally, after opening the safety cover, he pulled the trigger, dropping the match down onto the flashpan, igniting the gunpowder and firing off a ball.

Fortunately for Takahisa, who bought as many as he could for well over the market rate, it did not take long for his master swordsmiths to reverse-engineer the simple weapons. They even made some improvements, standardising bores to enable the mass-production of bullets. By 1549 they had already made their way onto the battlefield, when Takahisa successfully besieged Kajiki castle. Another notable milestone that year was the arrival of the Jesuit priest Francis Xavier, in Satsuma. Eager to sow the seeds of Christianity, missionaries began travelling to the country with merchants. As they spread further afield, so did knowledge of the mysterious arquebus, later known as teppo.

SMITHING WESTERN WEAPONS

Once the country’s swordsmiths had become exceptional gunsmiths, they established ‘schools’, turning far-flung villages, like Sakai in Kyushu and Kunitomo in central Honshû, into renowned weapons manufacturers.

Orders for the guns, nicknamed tanegashimas, began to fly in from warlords across the country. The smiths of Kunitomo received a huge order of 500 guns from Oda Nobunaga, the young son of a petty chieftain, who caused a sensation

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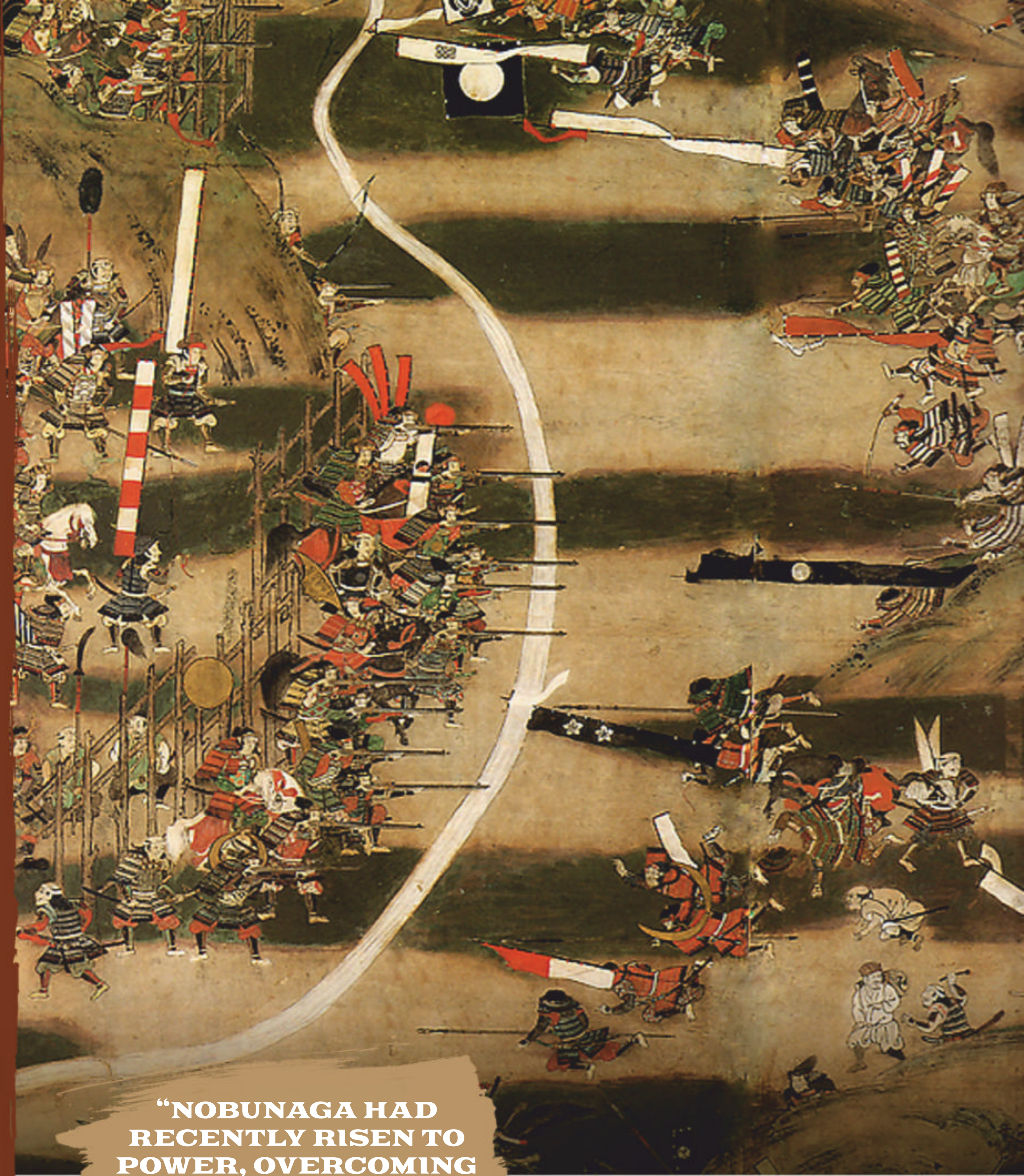


NOBUNAGA vs MONKS

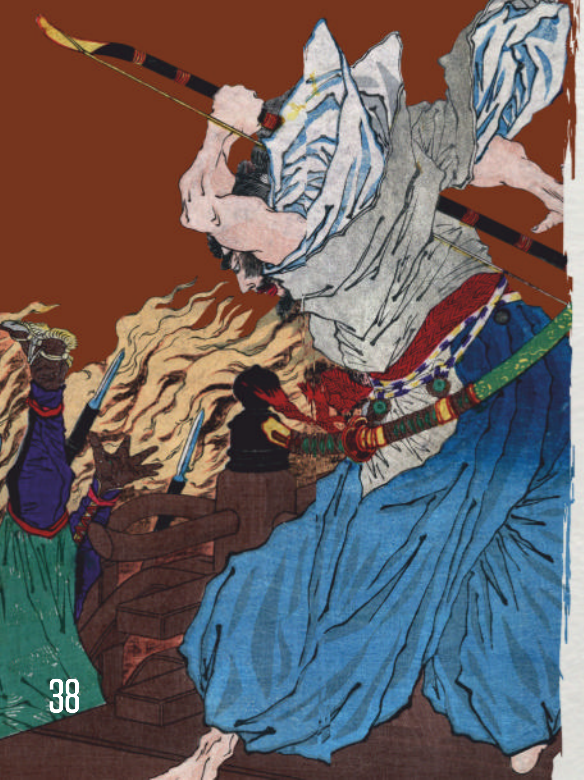
Nobunaga was a generous benefactor to Christians but waged war against Buddhists

By the 16th century, Japan's Buddhist warrior monks had amassed great wealth, influence and power. Chief among them were the Ikko-ikki, or 'single minded' sect.

Self-governing, the Ikko-ikki rejected any outside interference, even driving a constable out of the province of Kaga, taking it for themselves. When the shogun called for an alliance to destroy Nobunaga in 1570, the Ikko-ikki rose up against him – dealing the warlord some shocking defeats. Presented with the gravest of threats, in October 1571 Nobunaga attacked the monastic towns and temples of Mount Hiei, burning everything to the ground and butchering and gunning down every soul in sight – monks, laymen, women and children alike.

At the troublesome Ikko temple of Nagashima, he first starved the 20,000 defenders into submission, then barricaded and burned them to death. Finally after an 11-year siege, the longest in Japanese history, the Ikko's fortress of Honganji surrendered – narrowly avoiding another wholesale massacre.

After defeating the Takeda clan, Nobunaga is said to have visited the temple that held Shingen's remains and roasted the monks alive. He would later invite the moderate Jodo sect into his castle-town of Azuchi, where he rounded up and executed members of the historically militant Hokke sect. Though he planned to execute the monks of Koyosan temple for harbouring his former enemies, he later acquiesced.



ABOVE Nobunaga's victory at the Battle of Nagashino revolutionised samurai armies

LEFT Nobunaga's campaign against Buddhist warrior monks saw 20,000 burned alive at Nagashima

> "NOBUNAGA HAD RECENTLY RISEN TO POWER, OVERCOMING HIS RELATIVES AND EVEN KILLING HIS BROTHER TO BECOME CHIEF"

the next year when he paraded them in front of his father-in-law.

Takeda Shingen, the chief of the Takeda clan, based in central Japan, had more reason than most to come to terms with the new technology – having been on the receiving end of primitive Chinese handguns at the Battle of Uedahara in 1548, even before the arquebus was first used in battle. Locked in a bitter border dispute, he and his neighbour, Uesugi Kenshin, would go on to fight successive battles on the same battlefield of Kawanakajima for more than a decade.

While combat had traditionally been centred around mounted archery, the development of shock cavalry, using spears to smash through defenceless archers, had prompted a shift in strategy. Armies now incorporated a mixture of spearmen wielding three-metre pikes, elite swordsmen, cavalrymen and archers.

Despite the changes, for many, battle was still a matter of great ritual, steeped in an inflexible honour code embodied by the samurai. These knightly soldiers devoted their lives to martial arts, rising to glory atop great displays of ability and bravado on the battlefield. However, the violent nature of the time required generals to swell their ranks beyond the chivalrous classes, drawing from among the lowest echelons of ashigaru or 'light feet' – peasants who had absconded from their villages and robbers.

Nobunaga, who had hardly any elite samurai to speak of, recognised the need to not only train and discipline these warriors but also to treat them with respect befitting their growing importance – lest the 'light feet' flee into the enemy's arms. In 1554 he armed a group of his ashigaru with arquebuses and experimented with co-ordinated volleys at the Battle of Mureki – firing at the enemy

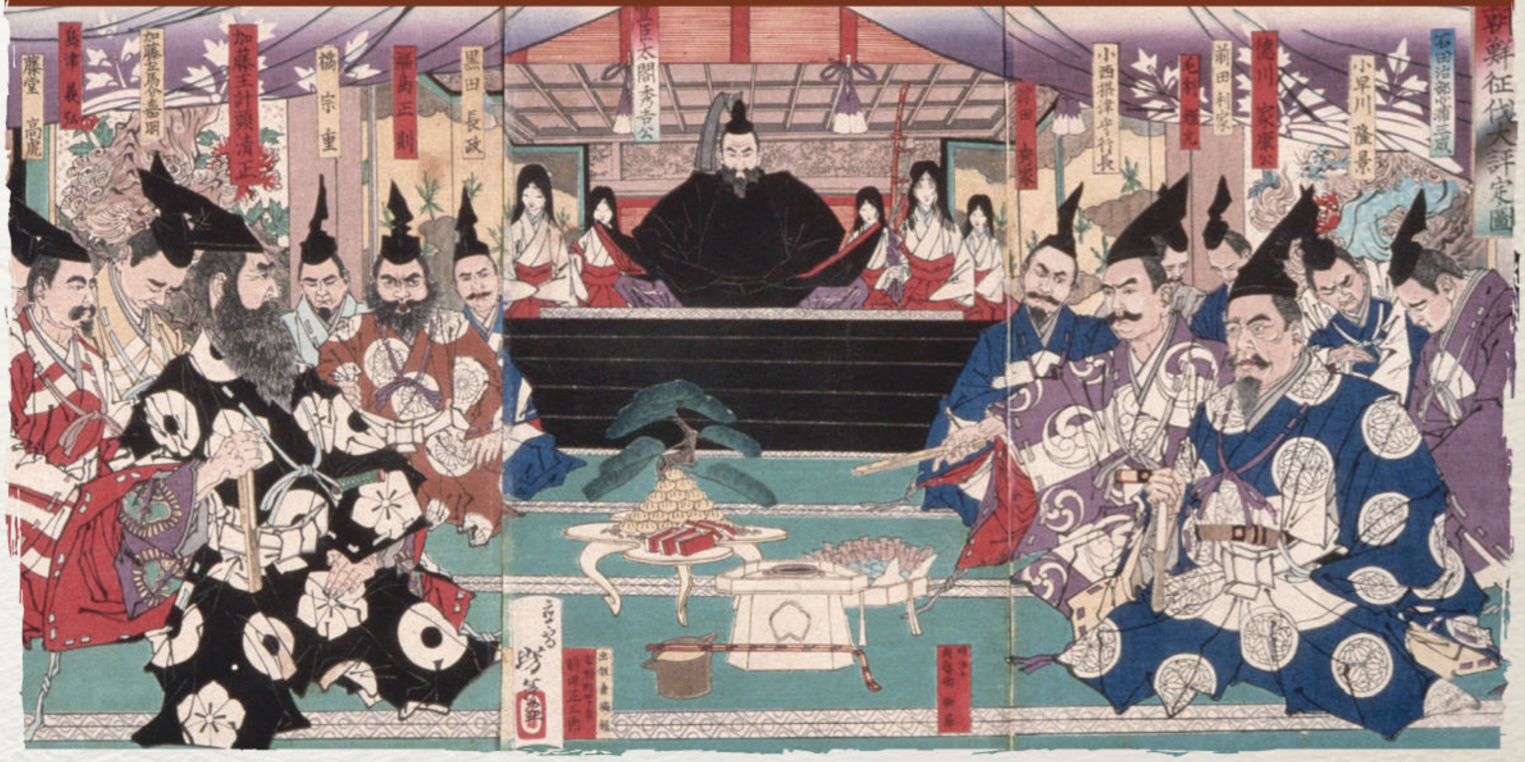
THE THREE UNIFIERS

Nobunaga's quest to unify Japan was completed first by his general Hideyoshi then his equally remarkable ally Ieyasu

After defeating Imagawa in 1560, Nobunaga subjugated one-third of the country. Following his death in 1581, his general Toyotomi Hideyoshi completed his campaign, conquering the Shimazu of Kyushu, and the mighty Hojo of Kanto, prompting the northern provinces to surrender. Having forced the shogun to abdicate for monkhood, he ruled under the authority of his own martial prowess. He later had himself adopted into the Fujiwara clan so he could serve as imperial regent, before installing a puppet emperor.

Rolling out a series of sweeping land surveys, he reformed taxes, rounded up weapons from all farmers and banned peasants from leaving their villages. He took steps to legally segregate the various classes of warriors, craftsmen, merchants and peasants, and religious institutions were placed under his central authority. In 1592 he launched an ill-fated invasion of Korea, hoping to conquer China, before dying in 1598.

After winning the Battle of Sekigahara, his successor Ieyasu was finally named shogun. The Tokugawa regime implemented even stricter centralisation of authority, micromanaging every aspect of society – from clothing to entertainment – and violently persecuting Christians. As villagers flocked to the city, life became increasingly formalised and the Tokugawa oversaw more than 250 years of peace.


朝鮮征伐大評定圖
石田治部少輔三成
小早川隆景
徳川家康公
前田利家
毛利輝元
小西摂津守行長
豊臣太閤秀吉公
黒田長政
福島正則
加藤主計頭清正
加藤左馬介嘉明
島津義弘
藤堂高虎

across a moat. He soon learned that even the least able of peasants could be quickly trained to use an arquebus.

PEASANT POWER

Shingen, whose Takeda clan boasted the most fearsome cavalry in all of Japan, took things a step further, dressing all his soldiers in terrifying red uniforms with rank delineated by minor details. At the Second Battle of Kawanakajima in 1555, his army of 3,000 included 300 arquebusiers. Though the opposing generals made peace to allow their ashigaru to return to the fields and bring in the harvest, Shingen was so impressed with them that he ordered 500 more muskets for one of his castles.

Though Kyoto itself would be easy pickings, great powers like Takeda and Uesugi were too busy fighting one another to campaign westwards. However, with the Eastern Sea to his back and no threats to the west, Imagawa Yoshimoto was well positioned to roll the dice. In 1560 he began his march west, invading the neighbouring province of Owari – where the 27-year-old Nobunaga had recently risen to power, overcoming his relatives and even killing his brother to become chief.

Capturing two forts with 25,000 warriors, Yoshimoto settled into a narrow gorge to celebrate – by observing all the heads his men had taken. There, having scraped just 3,000 men together from obscurity, Nobunaga struck under a cloak of rain and wind – wiping out the enemy and taking Yoshimoto's own head. Afterwards he allied with one of Yoshimoto's vassals, Tokugawa Ieyasu, now a young chief in his own right. The victory lit a fire within Nobunaga, one that would see him conquer his way across to Kyoto just eight years later, installing the dead shogun's younger brother, Yoshiaki, as the new generalissimo – and issuing him strict rules of conduct.

Though Nobunaga continued to experiment with muskets, in 1570 he was on the receiving end of a tactical masterclass. During a siege of the rebellious warrior monks, the Ikko-ikki, as the bells tolled midnight, 3,000 monks emerged from the darkness and fired on his men all at once – a hail of musket balls that "echoed between heaven and earth". Though they lacked training, the Ikko-ikki were numerous and as early adopters of the arquebus even ran their own gunsmiths.

FIRING SQUADS

That year, Shingen was said to have told his senior retainers: "Hereafter, guns will be the most important." In 1572, he led an enormous Takeda army of 30,000 against Nobunaga and Ieyasu. Though Shingen's cavalry suffered some losses to Nobunaga's arquebusiers, with the guns taking an average 30 seconds to reload, after the first volley the horsemen simply mowed through them. Utterly overwhelmed, Nobunaga and Ieyasu fled – the latter almost dying. The next year, Nobunaga again besieged the Ikko-ikki, this time hoping to use their

▶

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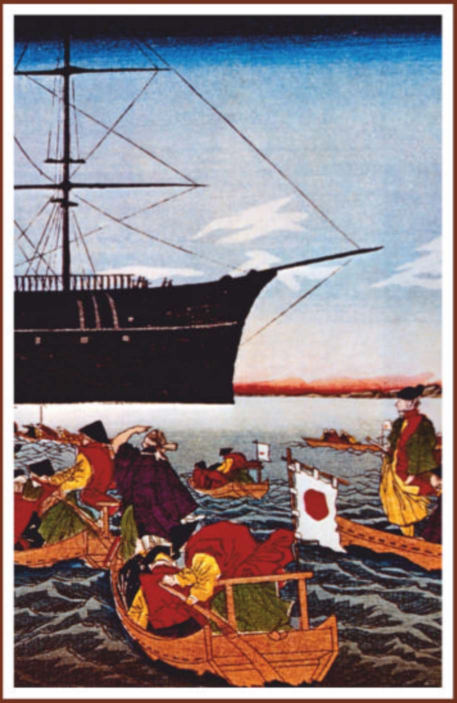
COMMODORE PERRY

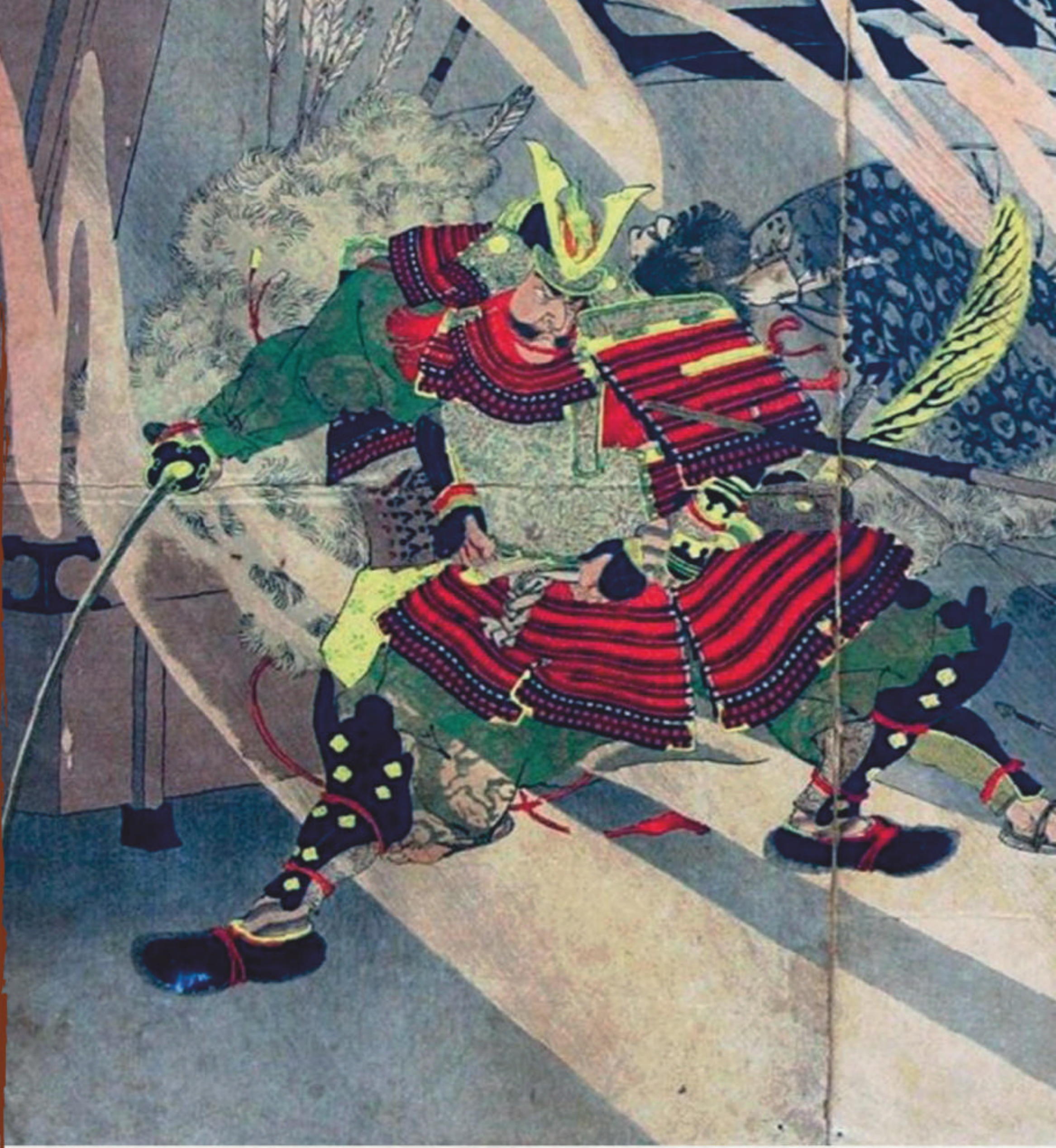
When the Americans visited with steam ships, the gulf in technology prompted Japan's modernisation

In 1635, eager to fight the subversive power of foreign influence, the paranoid Tokugawa regime banned anyone from travelling abroad or sending ships abroad. While its cities underwent rapid economic growth and cultural development, by the 19th century Japan had technologically been left far behind its Western counterparts, who had undergone an enormous maritime expansion.

When the Americans sent a pair of warships to request a trade agreement with the Tokugawa in 1845, they were turned away. However, they returned in 1853 with four magnificent steam warships, churning out black smoke. As the Japanese looked on in awe, Commodore Matthew Perry advised that if they did not agree to a treaty, he would return with a larger fleet. True to his word, he came back with nine ships the next year, with more than 100 mounted guns and 1,800 crewmen. This time, the Tokugawa agreed to an unfavourable treaty – opening up Japan for further deals with European powers.

Crucially, the incident revealed to the Japanese just how far they had fallen behind their foreign rivals. Soon after, the shogunate was overthrown and the emperor restored his prerogative powers – sparking off a period of rapid modernisation. By the early 20th century, the country had become a military superpower.





ABOVE Oda Nobunaga's rise began by defeating the invading army of Imagawa Yoshimoto

FAR-RIGHT Commodore Matthew Perry

LEFT The sight of Perry's steam-powered Black Ships shocked the Japanese

mass-firing squad strategy against them, only to find his guns and gunpowder ruined by the rain. Shingen died soon after, leaving the clan to his son Katsuyori.

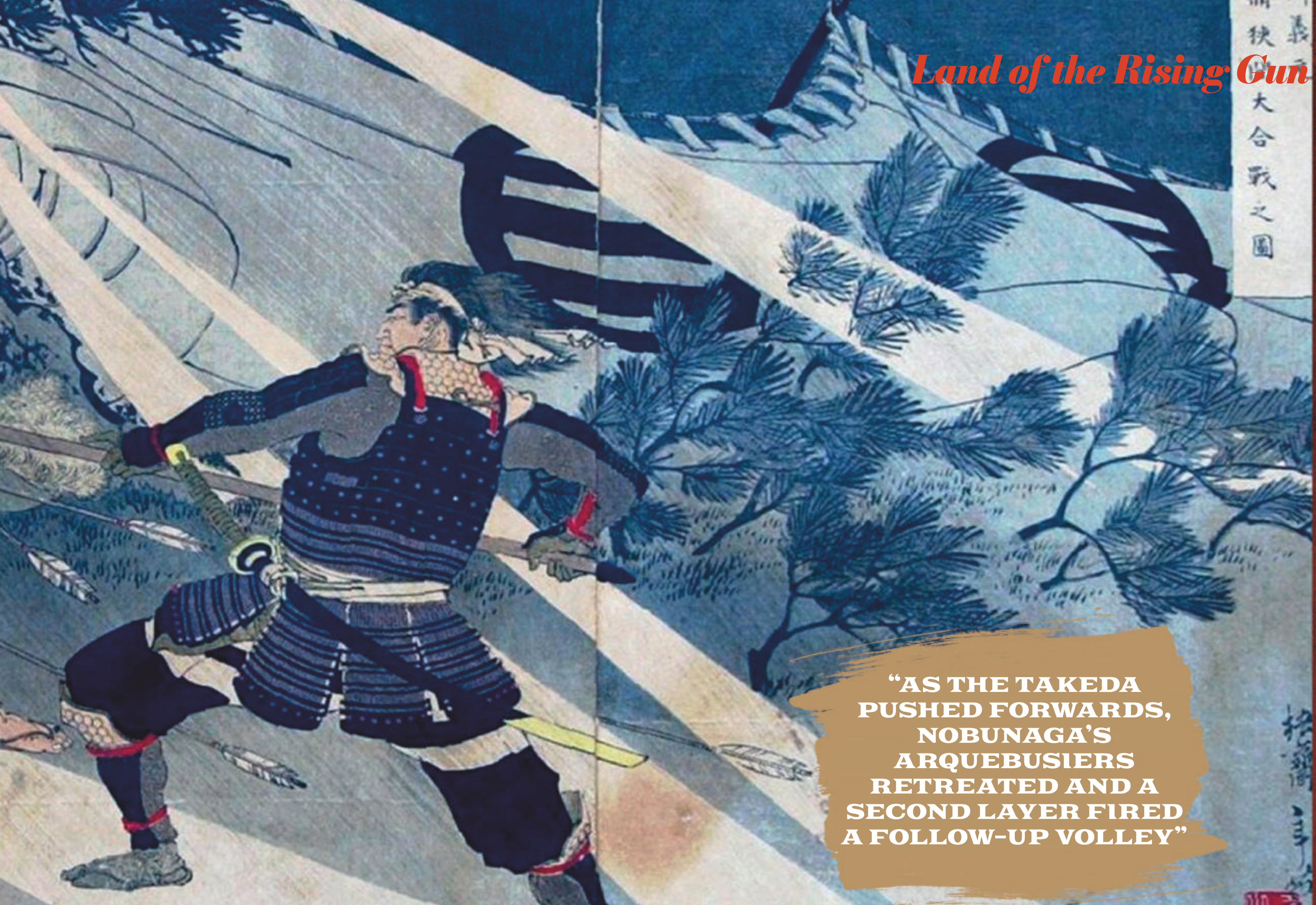
Keen to swoop in and take Ieyasu out of the equation, in 1575 Katsuyori managed to convince a leading Tokugawa officer at the clan's headquarters of Okazaki to open the gate for his army. However, when the traitor was caught and killed, lacking the men to besiege the castle, Katsuyori instead turned to the small mountain fortress of Nagashino, in Mikawa province.

Making haste, Nobunaga and Ieyasu rushed to relieve the castle with 38,000 men. Eager to neutralise the Takeda's notorious cavalry charge, Nobunaga chose a battlefield 5km west of the fortress. He picked an uneven plain, stationing his left flank against forested mountains, stretching over a kilometre, behind a shallow stream with steep banks, with a river to the right. Then, 50m from the stream, he had his men erect three layers of wooden stakes, too tall for horses to leap over, staggered in a zig-zag pattern. It rained that night, but this time Nobunaga made sure his men kept their guns and powder dry.

Although Katsuyori only had 15,750 men, he believed that his 4,250 horsemen could absorb Nobunaga's volley – which he assumed would be dulled by the rain – and go on to smash through the enemy lines, allowing his foot soldiers to wreak havoc, just as they had before. Nobunaga arranged 3,000 gunners three rows deep and placed each unit under the command of his finest samurai. As he looked on in magnificent o-yoroi armour, white banners fluttering behind him, the Takeda emerged 200m away from the forest. One hour later, Katsuyori threw the full weight of his cavalry towards the enemy, to the sound of war drums. Terrified, Nobunaga's men held their fire, kept in check by their squad leaders.

As the horsemen hit the stream, their momentum slowed and as soon as they emerged from the other side, Nobunaga's men launched an almighty volley, felling several horses and punching holes into their riders.

As the Takeda pushed forwards, Nobunaga's arquebusiers retreated and a second layer fired a follow up volley, then a third. These three successive



> “AS THE TAKEDA PUSHED FORWARDS, NOBUNAGA’S ARQUEBUSIERS RETREATED AND A SECOND LAYER FIRED A FOLLOW-UP VOLLEY”

waves of musket balls devastated the Takeda charge. Wave after wave of horsemen were torn apart in the same manner, clamouring over piles of bodies. In the ensuing and brutal hand-to-hand combat, the Takeda clan itself was all but destroyed.

It was an epoch-defining victory. The gunners alone had not won the day – it had taken an eight-hour battle to rout the outnumbered enemy. However, Nobunaga had neutralised the Takeda’s elite trump card, using soldiers drawn from the lowest rungs of society. His use of three ranks of arquebusiers was unprecedented and would not be repeated, with subsequent armies only managing two. The rapid nature of samurai warfare also meant that spear ashigaru would take the place of fortifications, forming a ‘ring of steel’ around the gunners.

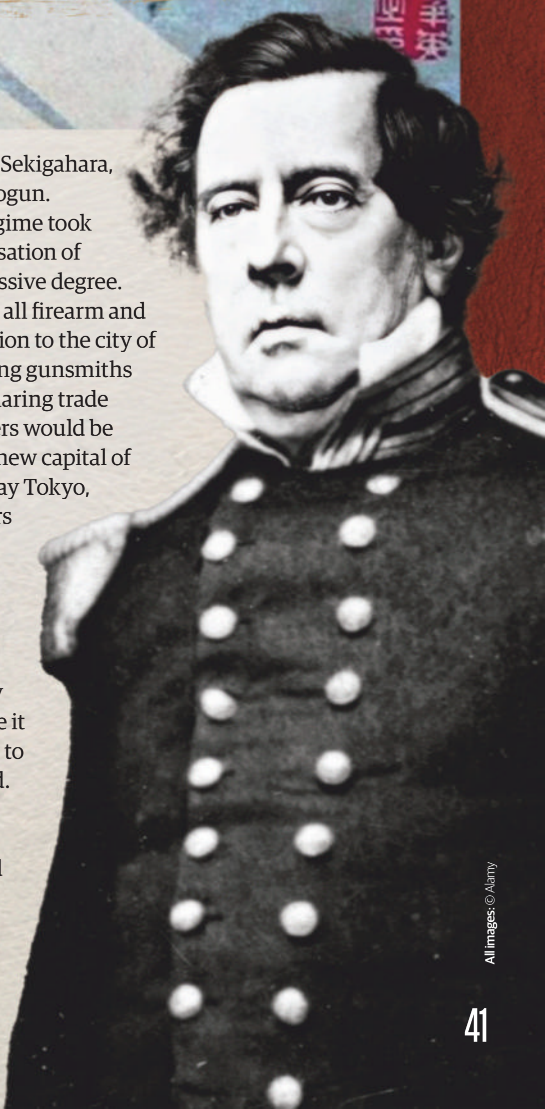
GUNNING FOR VICTORY

Nobunaga capped his revolutionary victory with a fortress unlike any before. Azuchi Castle rose 180m over Lake Bewa, with unprecedented stone walls, fitted together without mortar, thousands of metres long and 20m high, as well as a 30m-tall central tower. Inside it featured intermittent citadels to give defenders more cover to fire behind.

The year after Nagashino, Nobunaga led an army of 180,000 to wipe out the Takeda. His ability to field such enormous armies, controlled from a central command, fuelled the construction of larger castle-towns.

In 1582, having conquered one-third of Japan, while his army was away Nobunaga was attacked by one of his own generals. Rather than die by the hand of treason, he committed seppuku – cutting his own belly open. Toyotomi Hideyoshi would go on to avenge his master before seizing power for himself and unifying the rest of the country. By now, roughly one-third of most armies were composed of gunners, and armour was constructed of solid plate body armour, rather than individual scales laced together, to better repel bullets. Remembering the danger that arquebuses had posed in the hands of the untrained Ikko-ikki, in 1588 Hideyoshi confiscated all such weapons from non-samurai. After his death, Ieyasu defeated Hideyoshi’s son at the 1600 Battle of Sekigahara, finally becoming shogun.

The Tokugawa regime took Hideyoshi’s centralisation of authority to an obsessive degree. In 1607 they limited all firearm and gunpowder production to the city of Nagahama, forbidding gunsmiths from travelling or sharing trade secrets. All gun orders would be processed from the new capital of Edo, now modern-day Tokyo, but so few gun orders were approved that many gunsmiths switched back to making swords. Meanwhile, the government’s policy of isolationism made it virtually impossible to buy any from abroad. Ironically, the gun had ushered in a new era of unity and peace, one in which it was surplus to requirements. ○



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THE FALL AND

BRITISH STA

Dotted throughout the British countryside are over 3,500 grand country houses that were once the homes of the upper echelons of British society, some dating back as far as the Middle Ages. While many of these are now much loved tourist attractions, and some are still family residences, lots of stately homes have spent over a century struggling to survive. In the face of two world wars, seismic social change and climbing debt and taxation, many country houses have succeeded in surviving a period of history which saw plenty of their kind fall.

WHAT IS A STATELY HOME?

Stately homes in the UK primarily functioned as the residence of aristocratic and prominent families. Some of these houses have been owned by the same family for centuries and are often linked to a title. For example, Chatsworth House in Derbyshire has been the ancestral home of the Dukes of Devonshire and the Cavendish family since the 16th century. Similarly, Alnwick Castle in Northumberland has been owned by the Dukes of Northumberland and the Percy family since 1309. The wealth of the owners of such properties resulted in Britain's stately homes being known for their grandeur and luxury. The

RISE OF THE

TELY HOME

Discover how the UK's country houses defied the odds to survive as historic monuments and cultural centres

Written by Emily Staniforth

properties themselves are often vast and tend to sit within a large surrounding estate. Wentworth Woodhouse in Rotherham, for example, is considered to be one of the largest stately homes in the UK with its impressive 185-metre-long facade and surrounding 6,000-hectare estate. Built for both the comfort of the incumbent family and to impress guests, stately homes were intended to be an imposing sight to behold.

But the British stately homes were also important for reasons outside of being the homes of the wealthy. One of the major historic functions of these houses was as centres of employment. The upkeep of these magnificent buildings and serving the people living there was the responsibility of huge numbers of servants who made up the household staff. At the height of the stately home, in the 17th, 18th and early 19th centuries, a huge range of domestic roles needed to be filled to keep such grand houses running. Butlers, housekeepers, footmen and housemaids ensured day-to-day life ran smoothly through tasks such as cleaning, polishing, organising, serving food and attending to the family and guests. Cooks and a host of other kitchen staff prepared meals for the family and staff, while valets and ladies' maids attended the family directly, helping them to wash and dress. In addition to all this, many country houses also required outdoor staff

ABOVE Blenheim Palace is the home of the Dukes of Marlborough and the birthplace of Winston Churchill

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THE REAL DOWNTON ABBEY

The history of Highclere Castle and its Hollywood fame

The Hampshire stately home Highclere Castle has been the country seat of the Earls of Carnarvon and the Herbert family since the early 18th century. It has also become internationally recognisable as the fictional Downton Abbey thanks to the acclaimed television series of the same name, which began in 2010 and uses Highclere as its titular house. In the *Downton Abbey* series and subsequent films, the grand house is located in Yorkshire and is the seat of Lord and Lady Grantham and the Crawley family. The show depicts the trials and tribulations facing country estates and the people that lived in them from the series' start in 1912 up until the early 1930s. Death duties, inheritance crises and even a marriage to a wealthy American have served as some of the show's major plot lines.

Highclere Castle itself has faced many financial troubles and difficult times. During the First World War it served as a hospital run by the then Countess of Carnarvon, and in the Second World War it welcomed evacuees from cities. It has been an expensive house to maintain and in 2009 the current Lord and Lady Carnarvon needed to find millions of pounds to carry out vital repair work. By agreeing to the filming of *Downton Abbey* at Highclere, the house has since become a hugely popular destination for fans from around the world, helping to solve the recent financial stress of keeping the grand home going.

Highclere Castle was used as a hospital in WWI

such as groundskeepers, gamekeepers, stablehands, grooms and gardeners to manage the surrounding estates and gardens. Large houses could employ a total of around 50 members of staff, while smaller estates still needed as many as 20 servants. In 1901 it was recorded that around 1.5 million people in the UK were employed as domestic servants, which amounted to around four percent of the entire population.

As well as employment, Britain's country houses were also vital to the farming economy. Due to the huge amount of land tied up in these estates, the stately home acted as a centre of farming and agriculture. Local tenant farmers earned their income from working the farms they leased on the estates, with the rent they paid funding the grand house and family. Due to this, and the other employment offered by the houses, a stately home was an integral part of rural life for people in the surrounding area.

THE DECLINE BEGINS

Country houses were indeed centres of employment and agriculture, but to be sustainable they needed to remain solvent. Employing a large household staff and maintaining land required a lot of money, and a series of events beginning in the 19th century endangered the financial situation of previously wealthy owners.

Income from local agrarian activities began to be threatened from around 1750 as a result of the Industrial Revolution. Increased industrialisation and advances in transport that aided foreign imports meant Britain's farmers could not compete with new low food prices from abroad. This, in turn, contributed to an agricultural depression that robbed rural farmers of their livelihoods and stately homes of much of their income from their land. Increased taxation also played a role in the financial crisis faced by many stately home owners from the 19th century onwards. In particular, in 1894 an increase in 'death duties', a tax that had to be paid on inherited assets, crippled many families who inherited Britain's country houses. Debts mounted for aristocratic families and stately homes became increasingly costly.

Alongside the economic changes in the UK, huge social change was also afoot. Times were changing for the lower classes, and there was a growing feeling of discontent among the masses. Increased job opportunities meant more potential for social

mobility, which called into question the traditional status of the elite class. Many influential aristocratic families saw their power and wealth dwindle from the late 19th century and the futures of many British stately homes were endangered.

> "One of the major historic functions of these houses was as centres of employment"

Requisitioning

By the time the First World War broke out in 1914, Britain's country houses were firmly under threat. Many had already been demolished due to mounting expenses, including Trentham Hall in Staffordshire, which was knocked down in 1911. The impact of the war on the already changing social landscape in the UK was huge, with the social order upended as men and women from all strata of society fought and worked side by side. As a result, attitudes towards aristocratic families and their wealth became increasingly negative.

The catastrophic war resulted in the deaths of nearly 900,000 British soldiers from all walks of life. Many male servants who had been called up to fight either did not return from the war, or returned wounded. Other former servicemen sought employment elsewhere in roles where they had the opportunity to earn and progress further than they ever could in domestic service. Some female members of staff also left domestic service during the war, instead choosing to work in factories or on farms. Emboldened by the potential for a different life and the changing attitudes towards women, some never returned to their former lives as servants. Furthermore, many aristocratic families lost their sons to the conflict, with over 100 heirs of British peers being killed. Without an heir to inherit the family seat, the future of many stately homes was jeopardised.

Serving a new purpose

While the war irrevocably altered British culture and society, it also helped to highlight the usefulness of the nation's stately homes as many began to operate in a new way to contribute to the war effort. A need for hospitals to treat injured soldiers returning from the front saw several stately homes requisitioned by the government and transformed into medical and convalescing facilities. In 1914, Wrest Park in Bedfordshire became the first of a number of country house hospitals after the home was offered to the government by its owner Auberon Herbert, 9th Baron Lucas. The house was established as a medical centre in August 1914 by Herbert's sister Nan, who acted as the hospital's matron from 1915. Throughout the war, Nan Herbert and her staff of surgeons, doctors and nurses welcomed 1,600 injured soldiers to Wrest Park.

Following Wrest Park's lead, more country houses converted into hospitals and convalescent homes. Blenheim Palace in Oxfordshire, the home of the Duke of Marlborough, operated as a convalescent home and its grounds became used for food production. Woburn Abbey in Bedfordshire was opened as a hospital by the incumbent Duchess of Bedfordshire, who acted as an administrator and nurse during the war, while the Royal Pavilion in Brighton functioned as the first British hospital for injured Indian soldiers.

Saving a stately home

After the First World War ended in 1918, Britain's country houses slowly began to revert to their pre-war state as the need for military hospitals ended. Though the homes had served a great purpose, they still faced many of the issues that had been plaguing them before the war. The peers who owned such homes ▶

ABOVE-LEFT The east facade of Wentworth Woodhouse is one of the largest in the UK

ABOVE-RIGHT The domestic servants of Kingston Hall, Nottinghamshire, in around 1910

BELOW-LEFT The impressive dining room of Chatsworth House in Derbyshire

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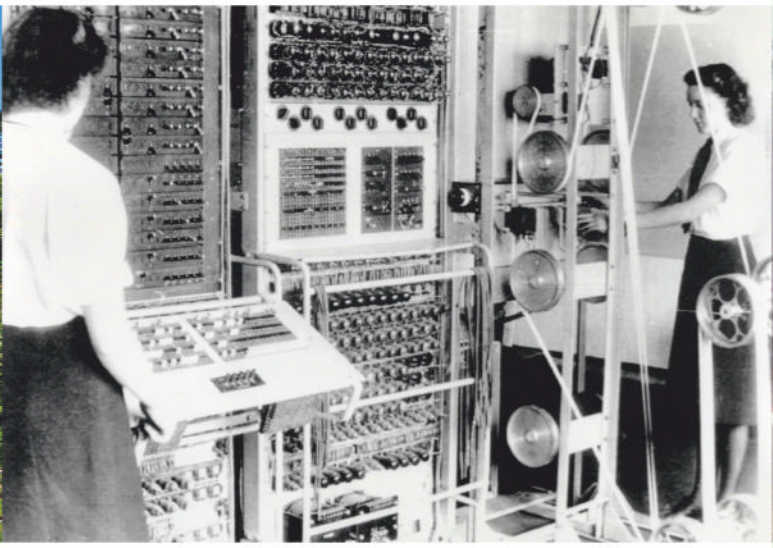


> “ATTITUDES TOWARDS ARISTOCRATIC FAMILIES AND THEIR WEALTH WERE BECOMING INCREASINGLY NEGATIVE”

were faced with difficult choices and, in order to save their ancestral properties, began to look for opportunistic and creative ways to inject capital into the buildings. Selling portions of land, auctioning off expensive antiques and furniture and investing in business ventures were all potential ways of making money.

One option chosen by several British peers in the 19th and 20th centuries was to seek out advantageous marriages. Marrying a woman from a wealthy family promised an influx of revenue that could be used to save dwindling country estates. The women that entered into these marriages were nicknamed ‘Dollar Princesses’ as they were usually rich American women who were ready to trade their familial money for a title and status among the British aristocracy. Consuelo Vanderbilt was arguably the most famous of these ‘Dollar Princesses’ following her marriage to Charles Spencer-Churchill, the future Duke of Marlborough, in 1895. Allegedly, soon after securing Vanderbilt as his bride and her dowry of around $2.5 million ($75 million today), the duke told her he had married her to save Blenheim Palace. The marriage was, unsurprisingly, an unhappy one and the couple divorced in 1921, despite the fact that Vanderbilt’s wealth had been a lifeline to Blenheim.

PRESERVATION

As peers worked to save their stately homes, the importance of such houses was recognised by the National Trust, an organisation that had been established in 1895 to “promote the permanent preservation for the benefit of the nation of lands and tenements (including buildings) of beauty or historic interest.” In 1936, the Trust set up the Country House Committee, which saw it acquire homes that were in danger of disappearing. The National Trust Act of 1937 enabled the Trust to accept gifts of stately homes tax-free in order to help preserve them. These decisions would come to be increasingly important in the years following another global crisis.

From 1939 to 1945, Britain’s stately homes were once again put under pressure as the Second World War raged. The loss of life and more social change threatened their existence anew, but the requisitioning of many estates saw them prove their worth once again. Stately homes across the country were used as hospitals, convalescent homes, government headquarters, schools and as accommodation for evacuees. By the end of the war, however, many country houses were in a dire state. While requisitioned, numerous houses had not been managed and maintained properly, leading to huge costs for the owners for repairs and restoration. Furthermore, the existence of such large estates was controversial in a post-war British society that had just elected a new Labour government. A sharp decline in those employed in domestic service, who left in their droves for better job opportunities in a rapidly changing society and economy, meant stately homes could not function as they once had and aristocratic families struggled to manage their once magnificent houses.

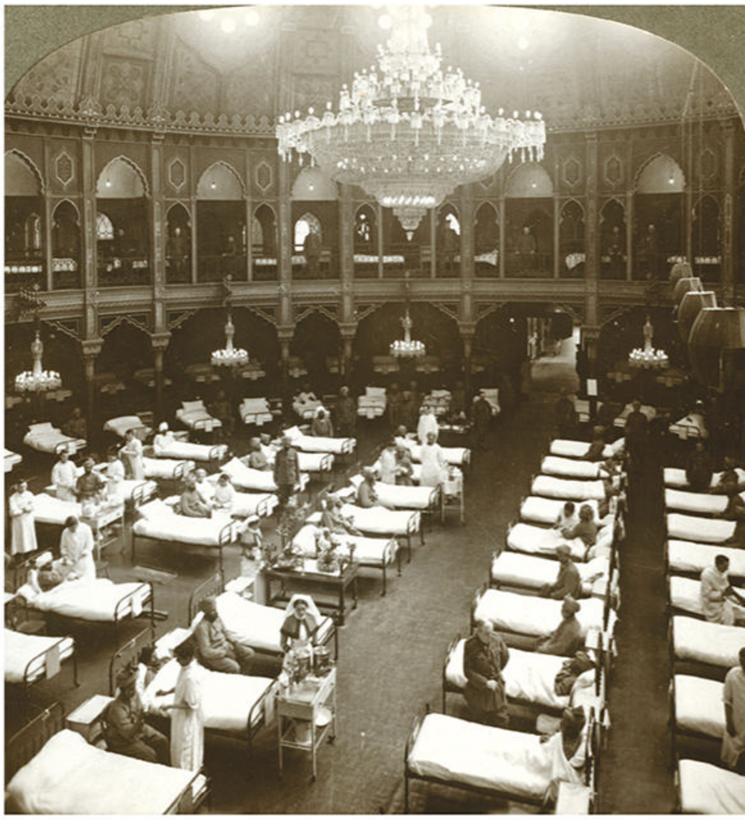
From the beginning of the 20th century, over 1,500 stately homes in England and Scotland were demolished. For the owners of these houses, they could see no way out of the mounting costs needed to pay for repairs and increasing taxation. However, in 1946 the National Land Fund ensured that at least some of the nation’s country houses were saved. The fund was founded by the government “to secure culturally significant places for the nation as a memorial to those killed in the Second World War.” As a result, many great homes were transferred into the National Trust’s hands

ABOVE-LEFT Cotehele in Cornwall was acquired by the National Trust in 1947

ABOVE-MIDDLE Codebreakers working at Bletchley Park during WWII

ABOVE-RIGHT Clumber Park in Nottinghamshire was demolished in 1938 due to the financial burden it placed on the Duke of Newcastle

RIGHT Brighton’s Royal Pavilion was converted into a military hospital for Indian soldiers during WWI



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The first house acquired by the National Trust after 1946 was Cotehele in Cornwall, a medieval mansion that had belonged to the Edgecumbe family. In the subsequent decades, increasing numbers of properties were gifted to the National Trust as owners relinquished their properties to rid themselves of debts. Ickworth House in Suffolk was an early Trust acquisition, being gifted to it in 1956 by the Treasury after the resident Marquess of Bristol had given the estate to the government in lieu of death duties. Hardwick Hall, an Elizabethan house in Derbyshire, was similarly handed over to the National Trust in 1959 after it had been given to the Treasury by Evelyn Cavendish, Duchess of Devonshire, in 1956.

COUNTRY HOUSE REVIVAL

In the 1950s and 1960s, most of Britain's surviving stately homes were viewed by the general public as monuments to a bygone age. The lavish country lifestyles of the 18th and 19th century aristocratic classes were a topic of curiosity, and an appetite developed among ordinary people to take a peek behind the curtain and explore the interiors of the grand stately homes they had only ever seen from afar. As such, a number of country houses opened their doors to the public for the first time, inviting people in (for a fee) to wander around the grand rooms and admire the historic architecture. As well as those homes owned by the National Trust, enterprising peers who'd managed to hang on to their estates realised they too could boost their finances by running their houses as tourist attractions. One journalist observed that country house owners "have decided the only way to weather the blizzard of death duties, supertax, soaring repair costs and high wages is with public assistance." Lord Montagu, for example, was one of the first peers to open his home, Beaulieu Palace House in the New Forest, to the public in 1952.

As more houses opened to the public, the attitude towards stately homes began to alter. What were once symbols of an out of touch top-down society were now seen as important historic relics that should be preserved for future generations. Many of Britain's great stately homes have played vital roles in the nation's history, as the homes of influential figures or the sites of momentous events. Since the 1950s and 1960s, many stately homes have remained enticing tourist attractions and have adapted to serve the thousands of people who visit them each year. According to Historic England, over 22 million people visited England's historic houses in 2022. With continuing interest from the public bringing in money to support maintenance and restoration, the looming extinction of the stately home has been pulled back from the brink. Today country houses are seen as a monument to Britain's social and cultural past, a piece of history to be protected, explored and enjoyed for years to come. ○

STATELY HOMES AT WAR

How Britain's country houses were used in WWII

HARDWICK HALL

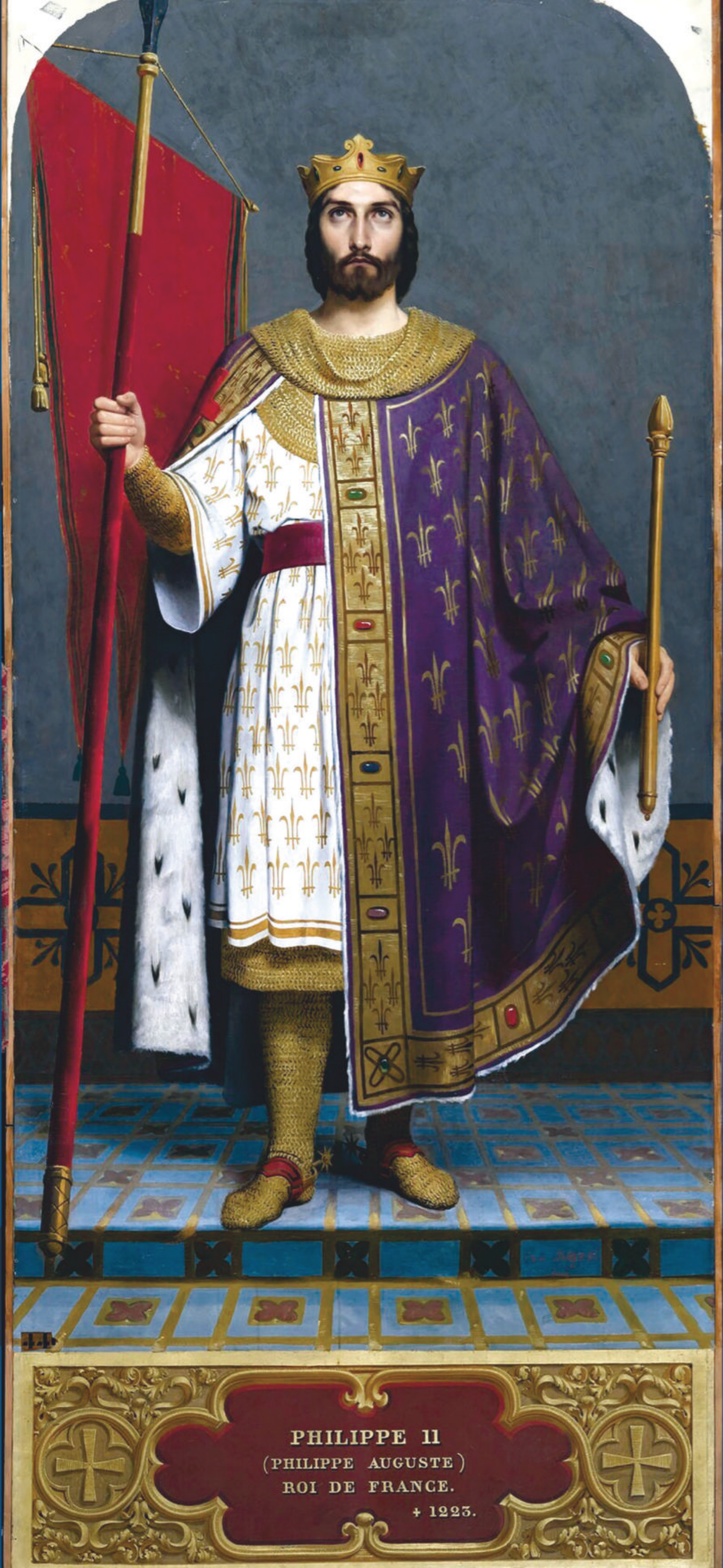
In 1941, Hardwick Hall in Derbyshire was requisitioned as the training ground for Winston Churchill's new Parachute Regiment. A large village and battle school were built in Hardwick's grounds where troops could live and train. After the war, the training grounds were repurposed as a Polish resettlement camp.

BLETCHLEY PARK

One of the most famous houses from the Second World War, Bletchley Park in Milton Keynes was used as a base for Allied codebreakers. The Victorian house and surrounding grounds had been purchased in 1938 by the government in the event of war. Here, around 10,000 people worked in the Bletchley Park organisation – most famously Alan Turing and his team, who broke the Enigma code.

CHATSWORTH HOUSE

Derbyshire's Chatsworth House contributed to the war effort from 1939 to 1946 when the Duke of Devonshire invited the students of Penrhos College in Wales to stay in the house. Their school building had been requisitioned by the Ministry of Food at the start of the war and so for seven years Chatsworth was used as a makeshift schoolhouse for 250 female students and their teachers.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PHILIP AUGUSTUS

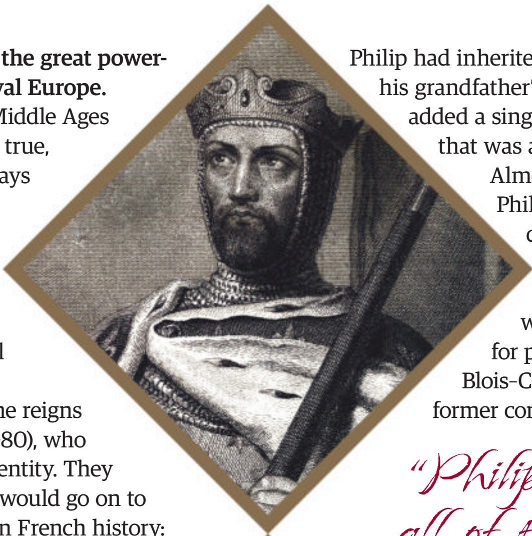
The man who forged France

Written by Catherine Hanley

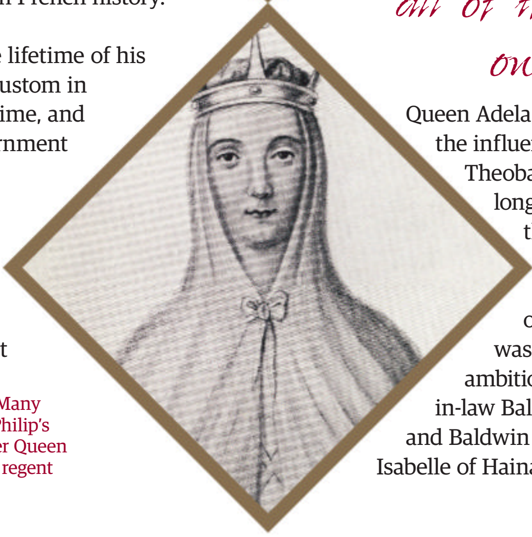
How one monarch unified his nation and created a medieval superpower

France was one of the great powerhouses of medieval Europe. For much of the Middle Ages this was certainly true, but it had not always been the case – up until the early 12th century, France was little more than a loose collection of counties and duchies whose rulers recognised the nominal overlordship of a king who exercised direct control over only a small royal domain centred on Paris. The first changes to this situation began during the reigns of Louis VI (1108–37) and Louis VII (1137–80), who developed a nascent sense of national identity. They also laid the groundwork for a king who would go on to be acknowledged as one of the greatest in French history: Philip II, known as Philip Augustus.

Philip was crowned in 1179 during the lifetime of his father, Louis VII (as was the prevailing custom in France). He was just 14 years old at the time, and he was obliged to take the reins of government into his own hands straight away due to Louis' poor health, becoming sole king upon Louis' death less than a year later. This meant that the ruler of France was a mere boy, surrounded by enemies both internal and external, all of whom started licking their lips. But Philip had inherited both his father's political acumen and his grandfather's martial skill and energy, to which he added a single-minded and ruthless determination that was all his own.



TOP-INSET Philip's father Louis VII laid some of the groundwork for a unified French identity



BOTTOM-INSET Many had assumed that Philip's mother, the dowager Queen Adela, would act as regent

Almost immediately after his coronation, Philip set about subduing his rebellious domestic vassals, cultivating a divide-and-conquer technique that he would hone to perfection in later years. There were two significant rival factions vying for power at the French court: those of Blois-Champagne and Flanders-Hainaut. The former comprised Philip's mother, the dowager Queen Adela, and her brothers, among whom were the influential Henry I, Count of Champagne, and Theobald V, Count of Blois. These two men had long been staunch allies of Louis VII, and they were (rather confusingly) Philip's brothers-in-law as well as his uncles, being the husbands of two of Philip's older half-sisters. The second faction was headed by Philip I, the powerful and ambitious Count of Flanders, and his brother-in-law Baldwin V, Count of Hainaut. Counts Philip and Baldwin planned that the latter's daughter Isabelle of Hainaut would marry the new king, which

> "Philip Augustus turned all of this rivalry to his own advantage"

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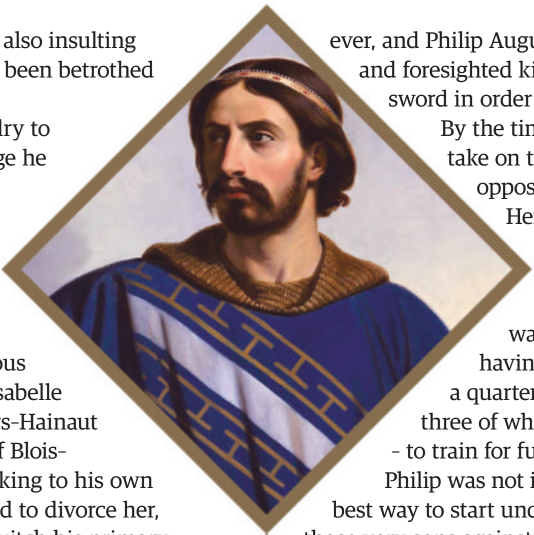
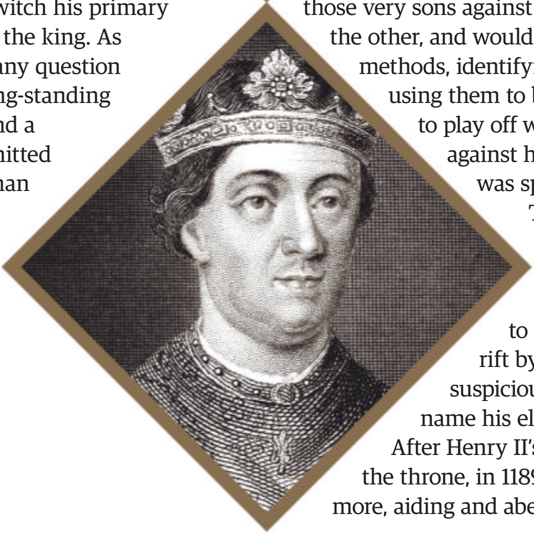


TOP-INSET Henry I of Champagne was part of one faction looking to control the young king



BOTTOM-INSET Philip II played Henry II of England's fractious sons against him

would enhance their own position while also insulting Champagne, given that Isabelle had long been betrothed to Count Henry's son.

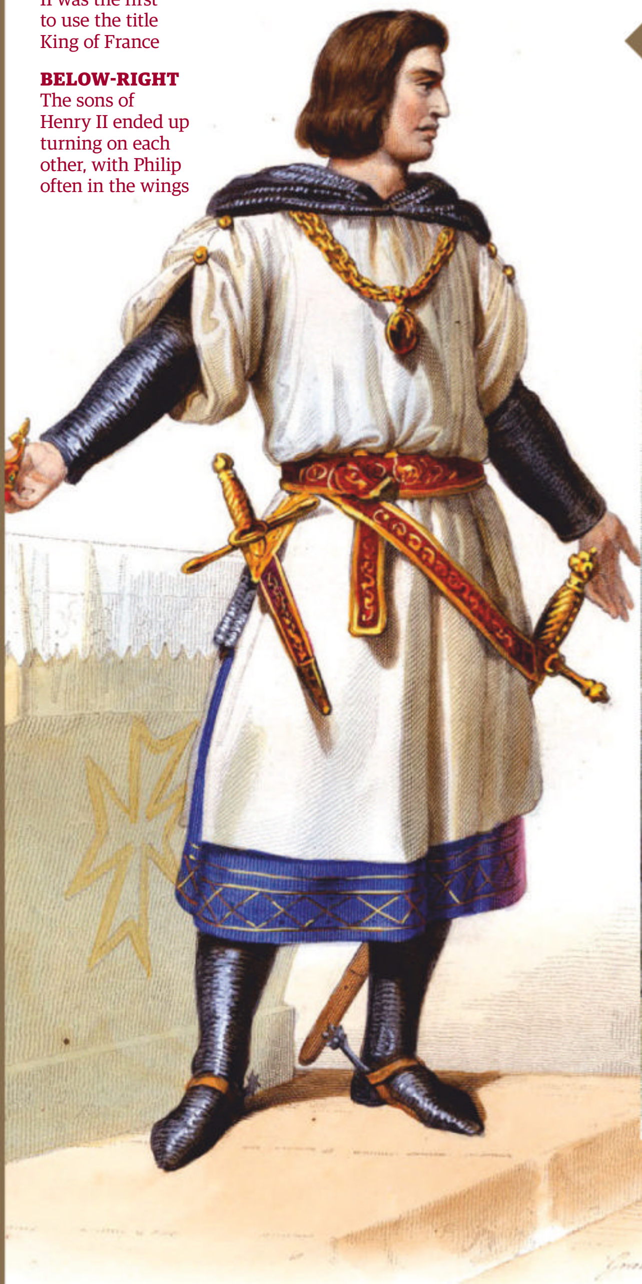
Philip Augustus turned all of this rivalry to his own advantage. Despite his tender age he decided to rule without a regent, and he took immediate personal possession of the all-important royal seal, much to the chagrin of his maternal uncles, who had been hoping that their sister, as queen mother, would be appointed regent and that they would enjoy vicarious authority. Then Philip agreed to marry Isabelle of Hainaut, seemingly favouring Flanders-Hainaut and further diminishing the influence of Blois-Champagne, but in this, too, he was working to his own plan: it was not long before he threatened to divorce her, leading her to plead with her father to switch his primary allegiance from the count of Flanders to the king. As soon as Baldwin did so, Philip dropped any question of separation. The result was that the long-standing Flanders-Hainaut alliance was broken and a humbled and isolated Count Philip submitted to the crown. France was more united than ever, and Philip Augustus had demonstrated that a shrewd and foresighted king did not necessarily have to draw his sword in order to achieve his political aims.

By the time he was in his 20s Philip was ready to take on the greatest enemy of all. This was his opposite number on the throne of England: Henry II, a formidable figure who, thanks to his additional holdings in Normandy, Anjou and Aquitaine, actually ruled more of France than Philip did. Henry was vastly more experienced than Philip, having worn the English crown for more than a quarter of a century, and he had four sons – three of whom were grown men older than Philip – to train for future leadership and domination.

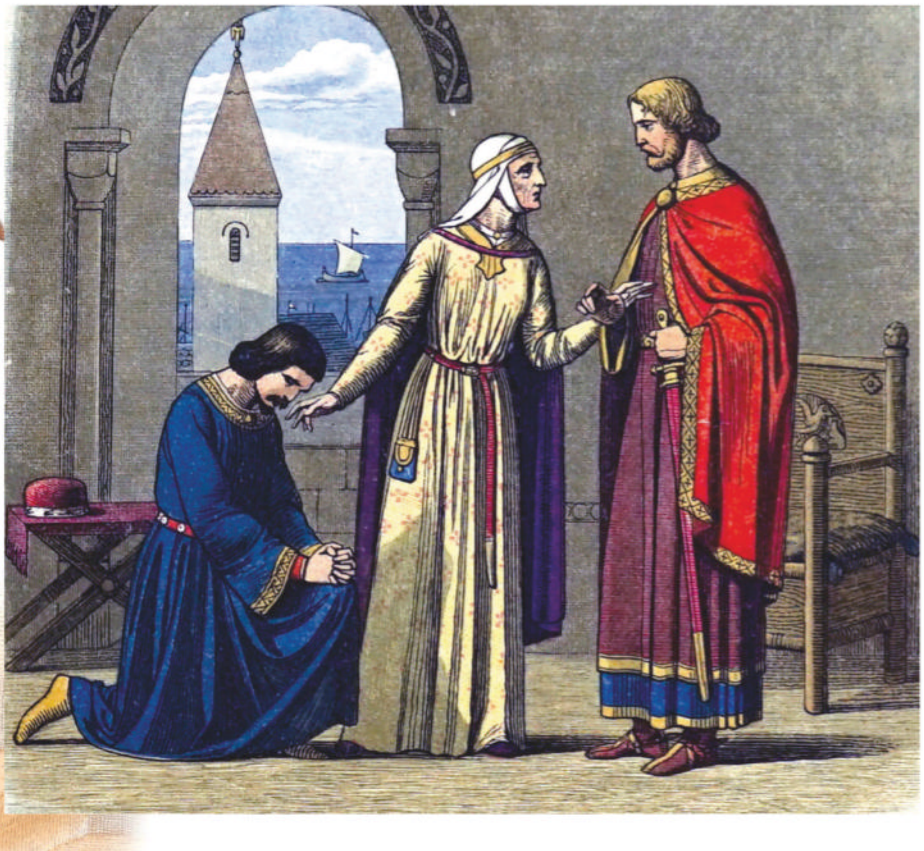
Philip was not intimidated, and he recognised that the best way to start undermining Henry's power was to use those very sons against him. Philip courted them one after the other, and would outwit the whole family by various methods, identifying their individual weaknesses and using them to best effect. His general strategy was to play off whomever was the head of the family against his heir and nearest rival, and in this he was spectacularly successful.

To begin with, Philip encouraged Henry the Young King and third son Geoffrey to rebel against Henry II, and after their deaths he switched his attention to the new heir, Richard, causing a fresh rift by whispering in his ear that it was highly suspicious that Henry II would not publicly name his eldest surviving son as his successor.

After Henry II's own death and Richard's accession to the throne, in 1189, Philip smoothly repositioned once more, aiding and abetting the young John in his rebellions



BELOW Philip II was the first to use the title King of France



BELOW-RIGHT The sons of Henry II ended up turning on each other, with Philip often in the wings against his brother. Then, when Richard himself died ten years into his reign, Philip played a pivotal role in stirring the conflict over the English crown between John and his nephew Arthur of Brittany (son of the late Geoffrey).

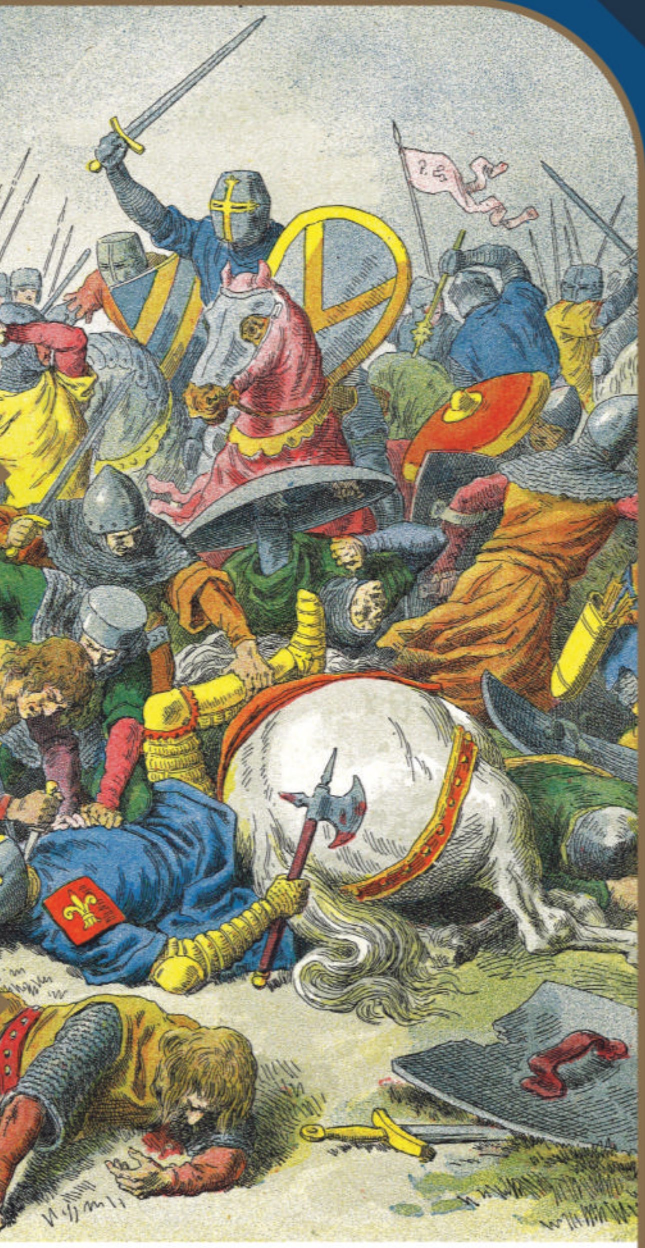
Even after John succeeded and had Arthur murdered, Philip was not finished. There were no further junior members of the Plantagenet family to play off against each other, but he was happy to take advantage of John's ineptitude by conquering Normandy piece by piece between 1202 and 1204, severing the duchy's long-standing link with the English crown and adding it to his own royal domain. France was larger and stronger than ever.

The coup de grâce came in 1214, when John made alliances with the Holy Roman Emperor and the counts of Boulogne and Flanders to attack Philip from multiple directions, but Philip won a glorious victory against the coalition at the Battle of Bouvines, while John himself was simultaneously seen off by Philip's adult son and heir (the future Louis VIII) at La-Roche-aux-Moines. For the remainder of his life Philip reigned supreme in France and was the pre-eminent monarch in all of western Europe. Every single one of his strategies had paid off – and, indeed, if John had not died unexpectedly in 1216, leaving as his heir an innocent child whom Philip was reluctant to attack, the crown of England itself might have fallen into Capetian hands.

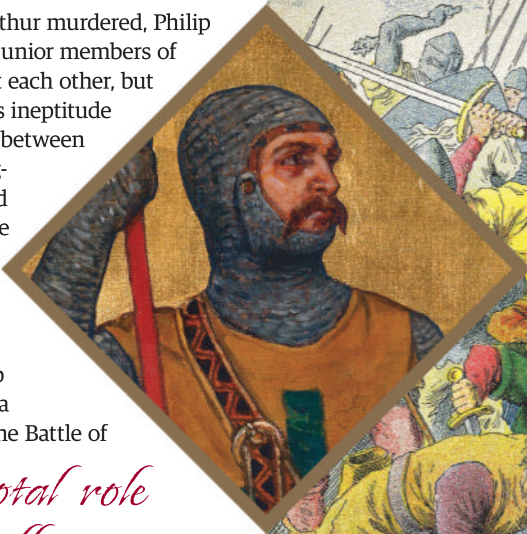
> *"Philip played a pivotal role in stirring the conflict over the English crown"*

The final decade of Philip's reign was a golden one. His crushing victory at Bouvines meant that he had nothing to fear either at home or abroad, and he could enjoy a luxury that Henry II never had: the leisure to retire from active campaigning and plan for a peaceful future. Philip had no need to be constantly in the saddle, criss-crossing his domains and fighting to stamp out rebellions, as Henry had been forced to do right up until his death. Instead he was able to become a benevolent father-figure to his subjects, many of whom could, after 40 years, remember no other king. "The whole kingdom enjoyed peace," wrote a contemporary French chronicler, "which was very agreeable to the people. The king governed his kingdom and his people with a paternal affection, caring for all of them and beloved by all." The people of France could feel a strong pride in their king and in a kingdom that was now a real nation.

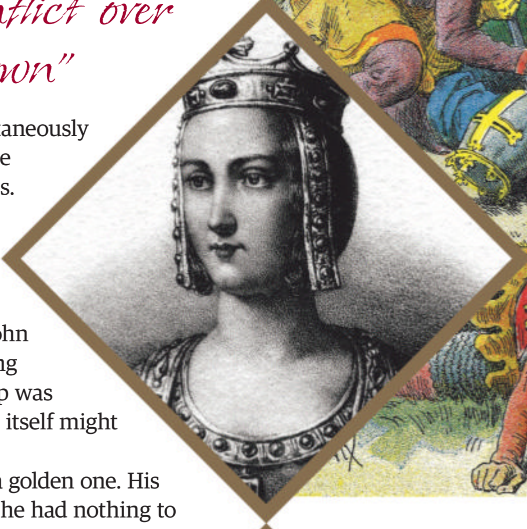
The history of France would've been very different without Philip Augustus. He inherited a small kingdom that was in a precarious position, with over-mighty vassals jostling for power and the looming threat of Henry II and his family casting a shadow. Philip not only survived this, but thrived and improved his position with every year that passed, demonstrating an immense talent for politics and no small degree of martial skill.



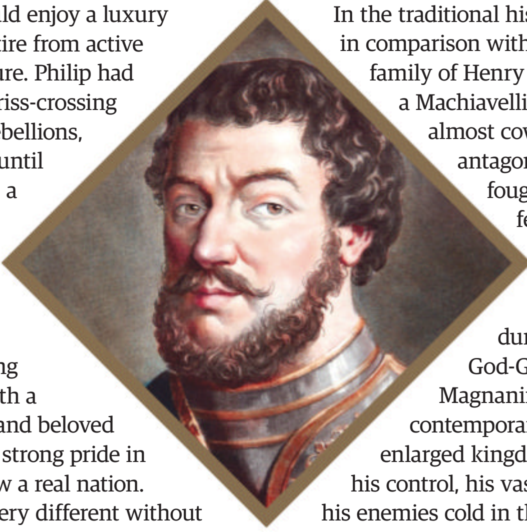
Philip II's victory at the Battle of Bouvines secured the expansion of his kingdom



TOP-INSET
Philip II played factions in his court against each other, such as the Flanders-Hainaut group including Philip I



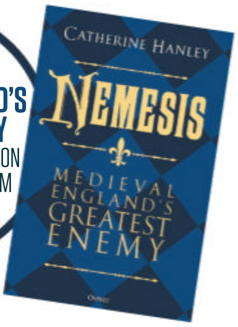
MIDDLE-INSET
Philip II's marriage to Isabelle of Hainaut gave him control over that faction



BOTTOM-INSET
Philip II was crowned at the age of 14 and reigned until he was 57

In the traditional historical narrative, Philip has suffered in comparison with the glamorous and attention-hogging family of Henry II. He has been characterised partly as a Machiavellian schemer but also as a non-military, almost cowardly man; a mere background antagonist who was lucky that the Plantagenets fought against themselves so often. But few medieval kings were as successful as Philip, and his collection of epithets tells us something about how he was perceived and appreciated during and after his lifetime: Philip the God-Given, Philip Augustus, Philip the Magnanimous, Philip the Conqueror. Unlike many contemporaries he died peacefully in his bed, his enlarged kingdom firmly under his control, his vassals compliant, his enemies cold in their graves and his family succession secure in the hands of a trusted son and grandson (the future St Louis), who were both at his side. His legacy was to leave England in dire straits and France as the unified and pre-eminent realm in Europe. ○

NEMESIS: MEDIEVAL ENGLAND'S GREATEST ENEMY BY CATHERINE HANLEY IS ON SALE 11 SEPTEMBER FROM OSPREY PUBLISHING



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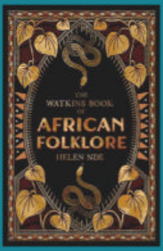
EXPERT BIO

© Helen Nde

HELEN NDE

Nde is a Cameroonian artist, author and folklorist who has spent her career exploring the rich mythology of Africa. She is the curator of the website and online community Mythological African, and the author of *The Watkins Book of African Folklore* (Watkins, 2025).


THE WATKINS BOOK OF
AFRICAN FOLKLORE
HELEN NDE

“THEY LAY BARE THE HEARTS AND MINDS OF AFRICAN PEOPLES”

AFRICAN FOLKLORE

FOLKLORE EXPERT HELEN NDE DISCUSSES WHY THE RICH MYTHOLOGY OF THE AFRICAN CONTINENT HOLDS IMPORTANT LESSONS FOR OUR MODERN WORLD

Interview by Callum McKelvie

As the second-largest continent in the world, the folklore, myths and belief systems of Africa are rich and diverse. These numerous stories originate from a multitude of ethnic groups, reflecting the cultures in which they can be found. For example, there are the Akan people of Ghana (as well as other areas) whose pantheon of spiritual beings includes Anansi, a famous spider-like god. Or there are the Tuareg, a nomadic people who traditionally lived in the Sahara desert and at the centre of whose mythology is the folk hero Anigouran.

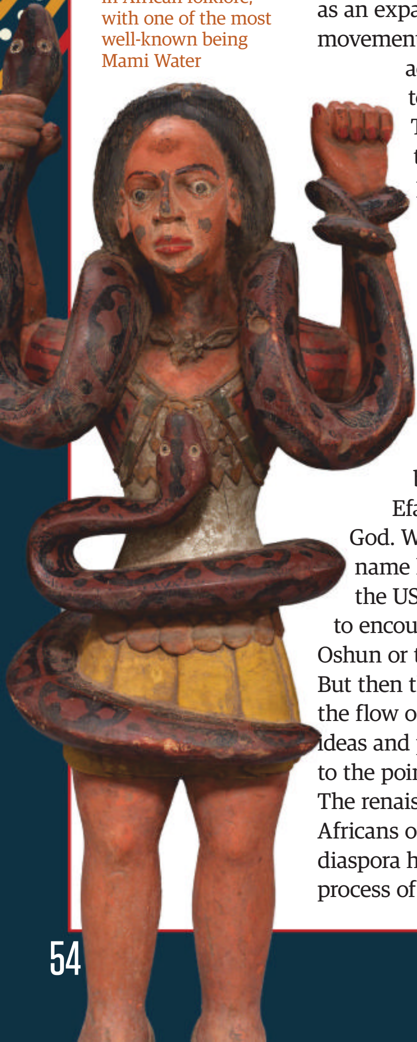
The preservation of African mythology was largely through an oral tradition, passed on generation to generation. In some West African cultures these storytellers are known as Griots, who preserve the history of their peoples and their folk tales and legends through song. It was only during the 19th century that these stories first began to be written down.

Today, much of this mythology has spread across the globe. Films such as Marvel’s 2018 *Black Panther* and TV shows like 2025’s *Doctor Who* episode *The Story & The Engine* continue to be inspired by the many African tales and characters. Helen Nde, the curator of the online community Mythological Africans, believes there is still much this rich tapestry of folklore can teach us. Here she speaks to us about the many links between the different mythologies, how they inspire contemporary Africans and why the ‘Enfant Terrible’ is her favourite folkloric figure.

All images: © Adobe Stock, © Getty Images

ABOVE The Osun-Ogobo festival is dedicated to the river goddess Osun

ABOVE For centuries Western scholars focussed on ancient Egyptian mythology and largely ignored other African belief systems



BELOW Water spirits are common in African folklore, with one of the most well-known being Mami Water

Why do you think there has been a resurgence of interest in the figures and stories of African mythology?

I used to think of this phenomenon as a resurgence, a vertical movement, but more recently I've been thinking about it as an expansion, a spread – a horizontal movement. This expansion is facilitated by access to better communication tools, mainly the internet. The interest has always been there. Muted, perhaps, with prejudice, misunderstanding, and respect for living traditions. Many of these figures and stories are, after all, linked to still-active spiritual belief systems. I grew up in Buea, a small town located on the slopes of Mount Fako in Cameroon, West Africa. This was a largely Christian town but everybody knew the name Efasa Moto, who is the Mountain God. We also knew not to invoke the name lightly. Even after I moved to the US, I didn't have to dig too deep to encounter names like Anansi or Oshun or the various Egyptian deities. But then the internet came along and the flow of information changed. Names, ideas and practices became more visible to the point of being up for public debate. The renaissance has always been here. Africans on the continent and in the diaspora have always been engaged in this process of cultural sense-making through storytelling. We are just now finding more ways to do it publicly with each other and the rest of the world.

The mythology and folklore of the African continent is incredibly rich and diverse. Are there any unifying themes or concepts?

Stories about the origin of death are widespread. There are over 700 documented versions from just about every corner of the continent. In these accounts, an animal delays or miscommunicates a message between the supreme being and humans with the result that death, instead of immortality, becomes the norm. Belief in a sky-dwelling high god or supreme being is also very common. This entity tends to be immanent, omniscient and omnipotent but also generally uninvolved in human affairs. In some parts of the continent, there's also, usually, a story to explain the supreme being's withdrawal from humans. In many of these stories, a woman does something to offend or bother the supreme being. Stories of encounters between people and creatures described as 'bush spirits' or the 'owners of the land' are also very common. These stories more than likely describe encounters between various African ethnic groups and the different autochthonous African hunter-gatherer peoples which happened in the course of the Bantu expansions and other migrations. African hunter-gatherer peoples are some of the oldest human inhabitants of the planet, so their knowledge of the natural world borders on magical. Interestingly, a theme that shows up again and again is that encounters with these 'bush spirits' often result with the human acquiring previously unknown knowledge. Sometimes the knowledge is shared freely, other times it is stolen from the 'bush spirit'. Another common theme is the case of the Prometheus-like trickster (a person, animal or creature) who brings some innovation to human communities. There are also clusters of myths about how men acquired knowledge and power from women, as well as about the first humans who came from the sky. There is also a large body of myths and legends about benevolent snake spirits, notably the python, which is venerated across most of the continent. Finally, foundation legends which start with highly contentious succession disputes and result in people breaking off to follow their preferred leader to another part of the land are also very common.

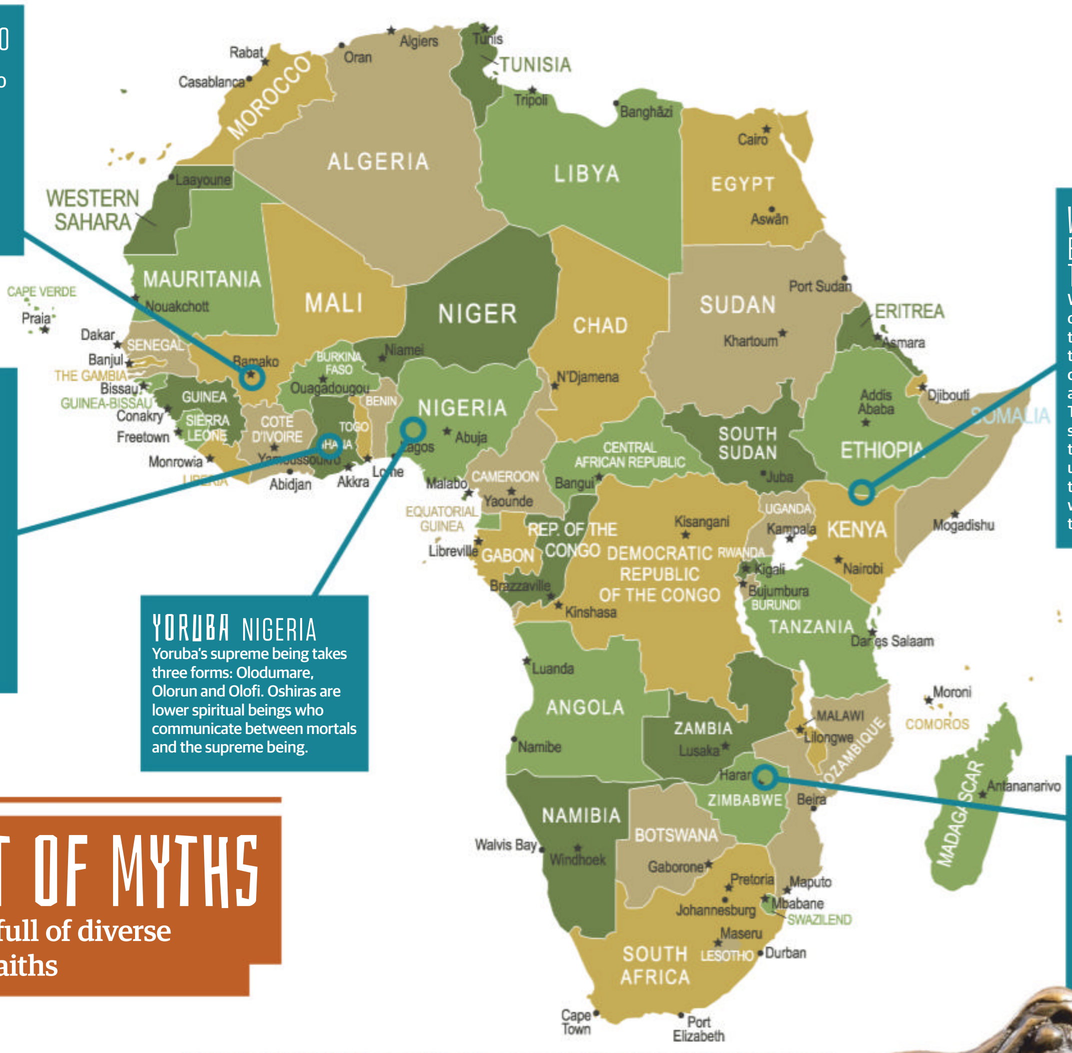
> "AFRICANS ON THE CONTINENT AND IN THE DIASPORA HAVE ALWAYS BEEN ENGAGED IN THIS PROCESS OF CULTURAL SENSE-MAKING THROUGH STORYTELLING"

What are some of the main regional variations and differences of focus?

Variations emerge out of differences in geography, philosophical outlook and encounters with external influences. For example, in Northern Africa, remote mountain peaks are often the place of

CONTINENT OF MYTHS

Africa is a rich land full of diverse belief systems and faiths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Casablanca
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Aswān
Laayoune
WESTERN SAHARA
MAURITANIA
Nouakchott
CAPE VERDE
Praia
Dakar
SENEGAL
Banjul
THE GAMBIA
Bissau
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Conakry
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Abidjan
GHANA
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TOGO
Lome
BENIN
BURKINA FASO
Ouagadougou
Bamako
MALI
Niamey
NIGER
NIGERIA
Abuja
Lagos
CHAD
N'Djamena
SUDAN
Khartoum
Port Sudan
ERITREA
Asmara
Djibouti
Addis Ababa
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Juba
CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC
Bangui
CAMEROON
Yaounde
Malabo
EQUATORIAL GUINEA
Libreville
GABON
REP. OF THE CONGO
Brazzaville
Kinshasa
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO
Kisangani
UGANDA
Kampala
KENYA
Nairobi
RWANDA
Kigali
Bujumbura
BURUNDI
TANZANIA
Dar es Salaam
Moroni
COMOROS
Luanda
ANGOLA
Namibe
ZAMBIA
Lusaka
MALAWI
Lilongwe
MOZAMBIQUE
Harare
ZIMBABWE
Beira
Antananarivo
MADAGASCAR
NAMIBIA
Walvis Bay
Windhoek
BOTSWANA
Gaborone
Pretoria
Maputo
Johannesburg
Mbabane
SWAZILAND
Maseru
LESOTHO
Durban
SOUTH AFRICA
Cape Town
Port Elizabeth

DOGON MALI, BURKINA FASO

The vast cliff-strewn region of the Bandigara Escarpment covers 400,000 hectares of land and is home to the Dogon people, whose supreme being is Amna. Much of the Dogon belief system is linked to cosmology, considered remarkable as it mirrors scientific knowledge which was not discovered by astronomers until the 19th and 20th centuries.

ANANSI GHANA

Ghana is home to the Akan, and the supreme being of the Akan religion is the god Onyame. However, there are numerous other deities. One of the most noteworthy is Anansi (or Ananse), a half-human and half-spider being who takes on the attributes of a 'trickster' figure. Associated with stories and knowledge, Anansi has a wealth of folklore attached to him.

YORUBA NIGERIA

Yoruba's supreme being takes three forms: Olodumare, Olorun and Olofi. Oshiras are lower spiritual beings who communicate between mortals and the supreme being.

WAAQEFFANNAA ETHIOPIA, KENYA AND THE HORN OF AFRICA

Waaqeffannaa is the religion of the Oromo people and takes its name from Waaqa, the supreme being and the creator of all life. Known as 'the Black God', author Tarfassa W Barooddee states that this refers not to race but "denotes the unfathomable mystery of the created universe, as well as the ineffable darkness that preceded it".

SHONA ZIMBABWE

The religion of the Shona people places the god Mwari at the centre. They also believe very strongly in the spirit world. Ancestral spirits are very important to Shona and their religion believes they can possess humans in order to communicate the will of Mwari.

mystery and mythical encounters. As you go south, the locations of importance change. To the Tuareg whose lives were, traditionally, spent travelling across the Sahara, the silent, hostile void of the desert is a place of myth and mystery. As you enter the forests of West and Central Africa, the location changes to the dark and dangerous depths of the forest. For people who live along the coast or on the banks of great rivers or lakes, these geographical landforms and the relationship the people have with them dominate oral traditions. Another variation is in how West African coastal folklore about water spirits has been influenced by encounters with European folklore after centuries of trade, for better or worse. Many depictions of water spirits show fish-tailed mermaids. However, further inland and in much of East and Southern Africa, water spirits are traditionally more reptilian: crocodiles, snakes and the like. ▶

Anansi
Africa Corridor

RIGHT A statue of the goddess Oshun at the Osun-Osogbo Sacred Grove in Nigeria

FAR-RIGHT A bronze sculpture of the god Anansi in Portland, Oregon

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Similarly, in Northern Africa, folklore about nature and ancestral spirits has been influenced by Islam and proximity to Southern Europe. In other parts of Africa where Christianity is more prevalent and tends to be more hostile to ideas about nature and ancestral beliefs, this shows up in folklore as well.

Do you have a particular favourite story or folk legend?

I don't have a favourite story per se, but I have a favourite folktale type. This features a quintessentially African folkloric figure known as the Enfant Terrible. Enfant Terribles are hard to define. They are both hero and villain; disruptor and preserver of the status quo; both the wisest, the most cunning and also the most foolish. They are more complex figures than tricksters; they are basically the quantum particles of African folklore, adapting to whichever role their communities need to navigate whatever challenges they might be facing. A typical Enfant Terrible story starts with their auspicious birth and then progresses through their evolution from highly precocious (or prolific in other not-so-good aspects) children to adults who radically transform their communities.

What is the meaning or lesson you personally take from this story and how do you think it translates to the modern world?

I mostly love that Enfant Terribles do not conform to any particular role. Mythology and folklore can be quite rigid in its characterisation of people, the result being that if a person displays a cluster of attributes, they get stuck in a role and can only ever be in that role. Enfant Terribles and their stories of beating the odds (or simply unravelling the rules of the game) offer something else: adaptability. If ever we needed to learn something as modern humans, it's adaptability. But Enfant Terrible stories also teach limits, the idea that everything cycles through the process of emergence and subsidence. Depending on the role they play, equilibrium must return, so they end up exalted as rulers or gods, or dead. The right lessons must have been learned though, else another Enfant Terrible will come right along to finish the job!

What do you think people from other cultures or belief systems can learn from some of these stories?

Myths and folklore are our earliest and ongoing human attempt to make sense out of the mystery of life. They are one of the many things common to all human communities across time and space. I think by reading, appreciating and analysing the stories that come from the African continent, people from other parts of the world can deepen their awareness of our shared humanity and gain insight about how our relationships could evolve. Legends of heroic commoners and villainous rulers, for example, highlight a common human plight. Stories about times of lack and suffering and what it took to survive them offer timeless lessons. Myths which highlight the centrality of certain geographical landforms and the feelings of awe, terror or even devotion they inspire can inform and unite conservation efforts.

> "IF HISTORY RECORDS THE WINNER'S VERSION, MYTHS AND FOLKLORE TELL THE STORY FROM EVERYONE ELSE'S POINT OF VIEW"

How do you think contemporary Africans might take inspiration from folklore and mythology?

Speaking for myself, studying and analysing these stories has helped me arrive at a more nuanced understanding of the plights and potentials of the continent and its peoples. Layering folklore on history has been like adding just the right type and amount of seasoning to my meal. I can appreciate the taste, flavours and textures better. These stories give us insight into how and why people believe the things they believe and do the things they do. They explain why certain customs and material aspects of culture exist. They lay bare the hearts and minds of African peoples. I truly believe that we need to reckon with these stories and their implications for the continent and its people to move into the future.

How might mythology inspire us all to create a better, more harmonious future for the world?

If history records the winner's version, myths and folklore tell the story from everyone else's point of view. We must remember that oral traditions are not just folktales and legends; there are proverbs, riddles, jokes, songs and the like. All of these are media into which humans pour their hearts and minds. Studying them closely, and with an openness to learning from them, presents a low-stakes pathway to understanding life from other people's perspective. This understanding is a sure path to harmony. ○

Fortier Photo Dakar

TOP Griots are folklorists and musicians who recount the history and mythology of their peoples

TOP-RIGHT Offerings are made to the Osun river goddess in Nigeria

ABOVE A youth production of *Mwindo*, a famous epic of the Nyanga peoples. The story features an Enfant Terrible character

RIGHT Tuareg dancers celebrate the festival of Sebiba. The Tuareg are nomadic and much of their folklore is connected to life in the Sahara

TALES OF THE TOKOLOSHE

These goblin-like creatures from South African folklore are believed to do the bidding of sorcerers

The diversity of African folklore means there is a wide variety of creatures and entities that populate its many stories and legends. In the South of Africa one particularly popular – but terrifying – being is the Tokoloshe. These are small, goblin-like creatures covered in fur. Among their purported powers is the ability to hypnotise their victims and to become invisible if they drink water or swallow a stone.

The Tokoloshe often lacks will of its own and is summoned by wicked sorcerers to do their bidding. Despite sometimes being considered a purely mischievous prankster, some tales portray them as having a much darker nature. In some stories this creature has been known to cause disease and kill those who provoke its wrath.

The Tokoloshe can be avoided by an individual raising their bed up on bricks so the creature can't reach them. To tell of having encountered a Tokoloshe is only to ensure a return visit from the fiendish creature, so its existence is often kept secret. Should you encounter one, it is believed that only a shaman has the power to fully expel it from your life.

The mischievous Tokoloshe also has a darker side

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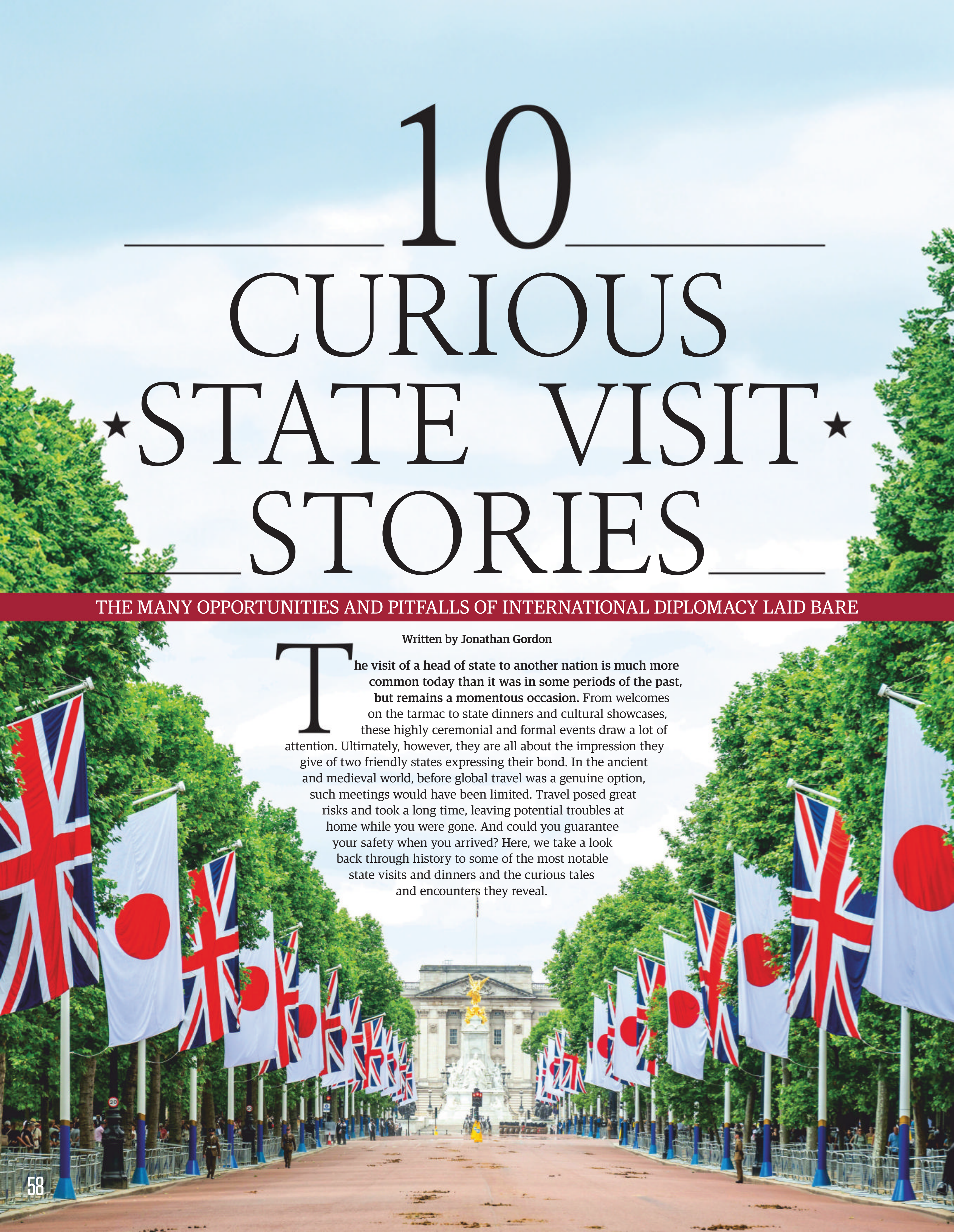


10 CURIOUS ★STATE VISIT★ STORIES

THE MANY OPPORTUNITIES AND PITFALLS OF INTERNATIONAL DIPLOMACY LAID BARE

Written by Jonathan Gordon

The visit of a head of state to another nation is much more common today than it was in some periods of the past, but remains a momentous occasion. From welcomes on the tarmac to state dinners and cultural showcases, these highly ceremonial and formal events draw a lot of attention. Ultimately, however, they are all about the impression they give of two friendly states expressing their bond. In the ancient and medieval world, before global travel was a genuine option, such meetings would have been limited. Travel posed great risks and took a long time, leaving potential troubles at home while you were gone. And could you guarantee your safety when you arrived? Here, we take a look back through history to some of the most notable state visits and dinners and the curious tales and encounters they reveal.

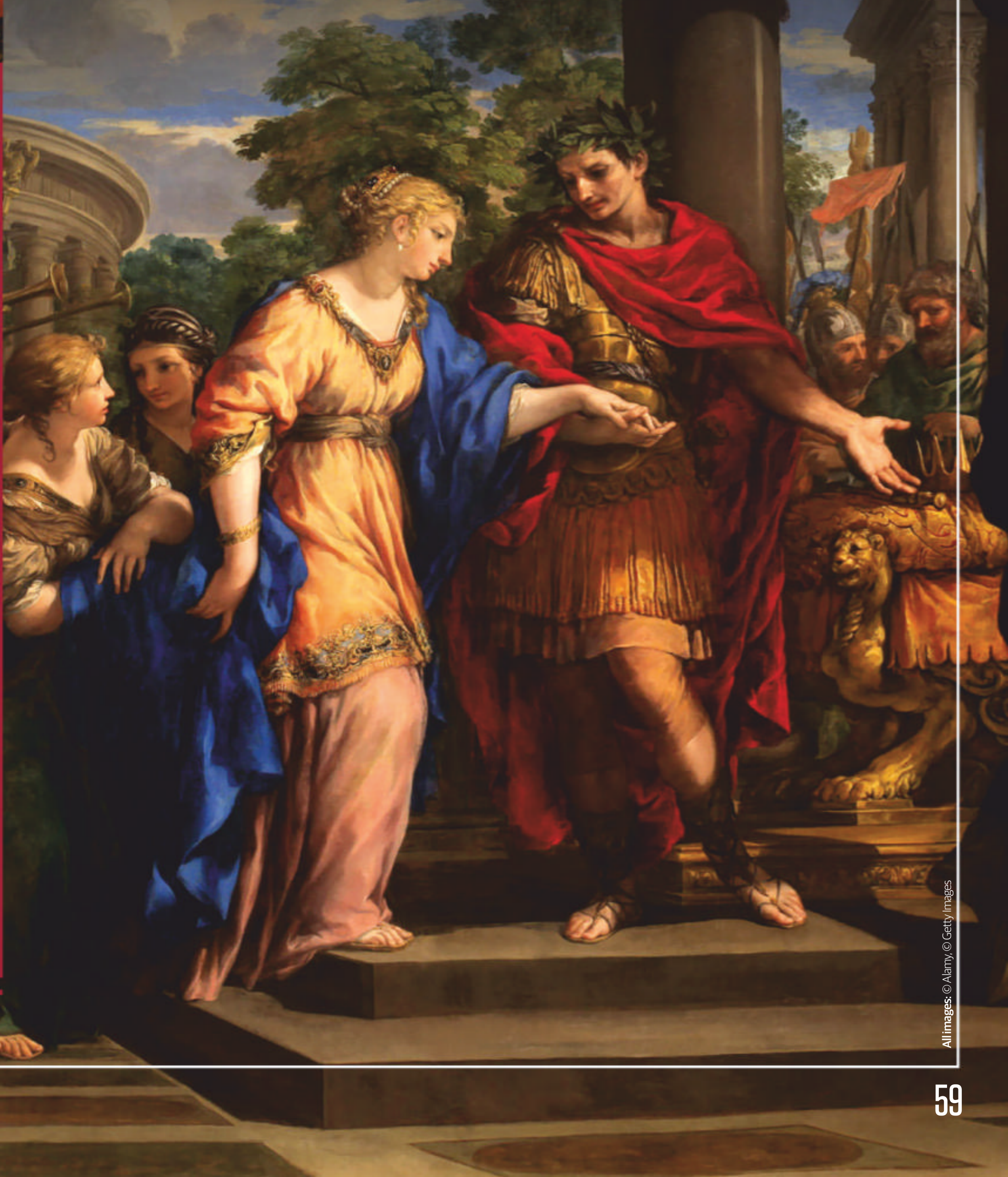
☆☆☆

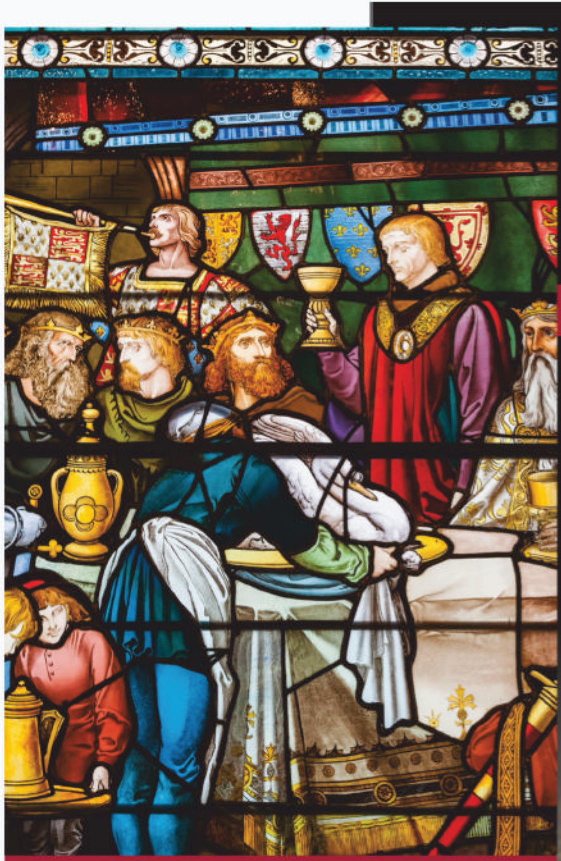
CLEOPATRA IN ROME

POMP & CEREMONY – BUT A DIPLOMATIC DISASTER

Cleopatra VII's extended visit to Rome from 46 BCE wasn't technically an official state visit, but we can think of few such trips by a world leader that were as consequential. Having had a child with Julius Caesar while he was in Egypt securing her place on the throne, Cleopatra took a large entourage, including her co-ruling brother Ptolemy XIV and her son with Caesar, Caesarion, to Rome. She arrived with a large amount of pomp and spectacle, showing off the enormous wealth that had made Egypt so attractive to Rome in the first place.

By all accounts, Cleopatra attended numerous balls, dinners and social events in her months in Rome, ingratiating herself with the higher echelons of Roman society and sparking a great interest in all things Egyptian among the masses. However, her relationship with Caesar, which he now publicly acknowledged, and her position as an unelected queen, added fuel to speculation that Rome's dictator had greater ambitions. In 44 BCE, Julius Caesar was assassinated by a group of Roman Senators. Cleopatra was still in Rome when this happened and made a hasty exit.





FEAST OF THE FIVE KINGS

THIS HISTORIC GATHERING WASN'T ALL IT SEEMED

There can hardly have been a more prestigious and remarkable state dinner than that set to feature Edward III of England, Peter I of Cyprus, David II of Scotland, John II of France and Valdemar IV of Denmark in the winter of 1363-4. The dinner was hosted in England and organised by Sir Henry Picard, a former London mayor and by that time a wine-merchant, who invited the kings to his mansion for a momentous meal.

The dinner came just a few years after the Treaty of Brétigny, which brought a pause to what would become known as the Hundred Years' War. However, the truth of the event is a little more complex. In fact, while five kings were invited to the dinner, only four are believed to have attended. John II was a captive of England, David II was recently released from captivity and Peter I was hoping to source funding or support for a war with the Turks. Valdemar IV seemingly didn't attend, but the legend lived on.

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THE MOST TRAVELLED MONARCH

ELIZABETH II WAS A HISTORIC GLOBE-TROTTER

As a monarch in an age of international travel who was on the throne for 70 years, it's likely that Elizabeth II was the most-travelled head of state in history. Beginning with her first official state visit in 1953 (to the Commonwealth nations) and ending with her last in 2015 (to Germany), she is thought to have visited 106 different nations with 96 official state visits. That's a lot of welcoming ceremonies, handshakes and dinners.

In those years the queen acted as the United Kingdom's ambassador to the world as it transitioned out of empire and into a world of equals. Along the way there were several notable tales. For example, in 2011 she was the first reigning monarch of the UK to visit the Republic of Ireland in 100 years, following her grandfather George V. She also went behind the Iron Curtain in visiting Yugoslavia in 1972, saw Moscow in 1994 following the collapse of the USSR and made five trips as queen to meet an American president, from Dwight D Eisenhower in 1957 to George W Bush in 2007.

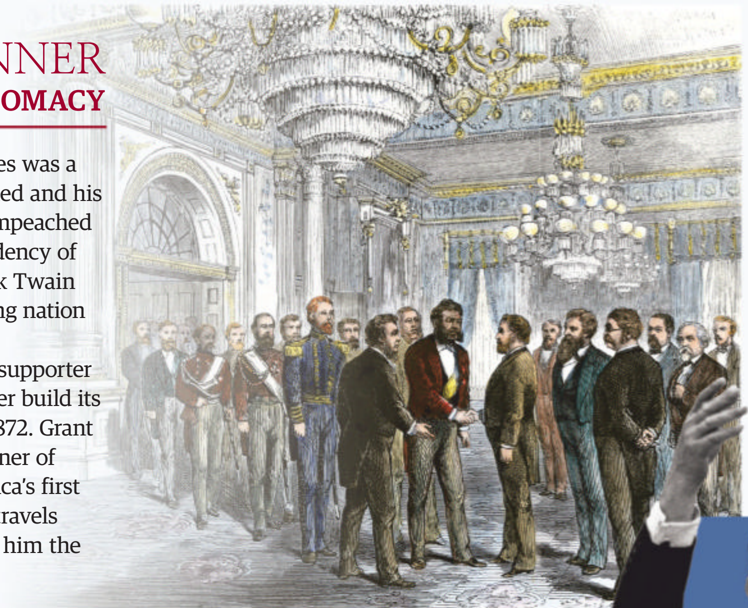
FREEDOM FOR UKRAINE

THE FIRST US STATE DINNER

MARKING A NEW ERA OF AMERICAN DIPLOMACY

In the aftermath of the American Civil War, the United States was a nation in disarray. President Abraham Lincoln had been killed and his successor, Andrew Johnson, was unpopular enough to be impeached (although he was acquitted by the Senate). It took the presidency of Ulysses S Grant, victorious general of the war, for what Mark Twain called the Gilded Age to commence. The US was still a young nation and had a reputation to build through diplomacy.

Meanwhile the Hawaiian Islands had been an important supporter of the Union through its sugar exports and wanted to further build its economy, so its King Kalakaua made his way to the US in 1872. Grant and First Lady Julia welcomed him to a relatively small dinner of 36 people, but it featured over 30 dishes in what was America's first state dinner for a foreign head of state. Notably, Kalakaua's travels culminated in a complete round-the-world journey, making him the first reigning monarch to circle the globe.

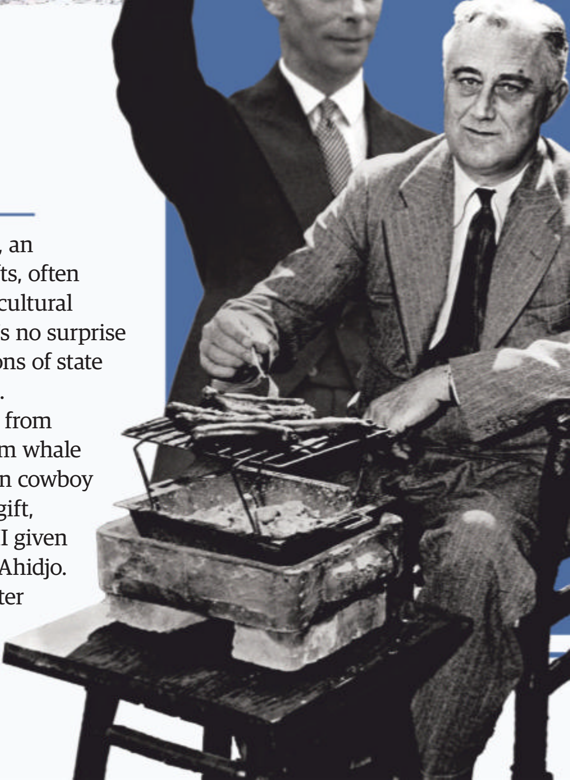


ODD GIFTS

WHEN CULTURAL EXCHANGE TAKES A STRANGE TURN

Alongside the welcomes on the tarmac and state dinners, an important element of any state visit is an exchange of gifts, often representing the cultures of each nation. But sometimes cultural differences or a lack of imagination can get in the way. It's no surprise that Elizabeth II ended up with one of the larger collections of state gifts given her reign and there are some choice examples.

In 1972 she received a grasshopper-shaped wine cooler from French President Georges Pompidou; she was gifted sperm whale teeth (tabua) on her trips to Fiji; and in 1991 she was given cowboy boots by the United States. One particularly extravagant gift, however, was an African forest elephant named Jumbo III given to the queen in 1972 by Cameroon's President Ahmadou Ahidjo. The animal was given a new home at London Zoo and later Whipsnade Zoo in Bedfordshire.

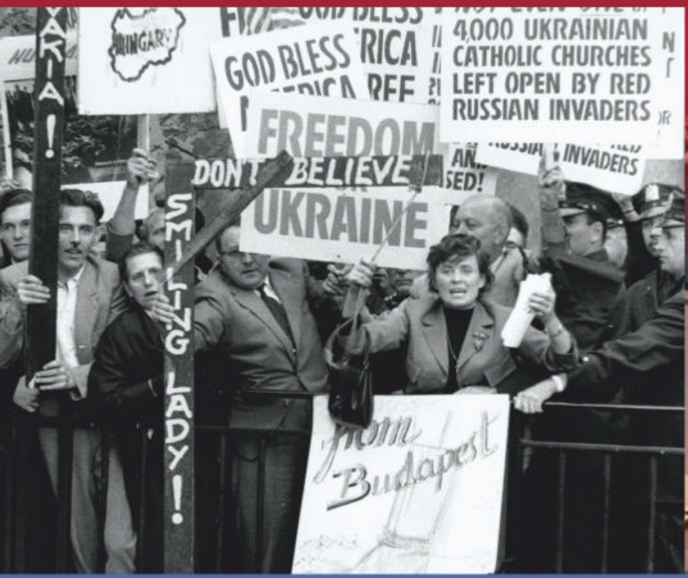


KHRUSHCHEV IN AMERICA

A DIPLOMATIC GAME OF CHESS

Having expected to be facing down Joseph Stalin, only for the dictator to die in 1953, President Dwight D Eisenhower extended the first invitation for a Soviet head of state to visit the White House to Nikita Khrushchev in 1959. The invitation came during a period of increasing tension, with the space race in full swing. After a few months of letter writing between the leaders, Khrushchev finally accepted and began a 13-day tour in September 1959.

A 100-person formal state dinner was hosted by First Lady Mamie Eisenhower, followed by a dinner the next night hosted by Nina Khrushcheva at the Soviet embassy in Washington, DC. The Khrushchevs then travelled around the US, a tour that included some controversial exchanges with some more belligerent state officials and a claim that Khrushchev was denied entry to Disneyland (it seems likely that his security were really the ones who said it was impossible to accommodate). An apology from Eisenhower seemed to set things straight, only for all good will to evaporate the next May when a U2 reconnaissance plane was shot down in USSR airspace.



HOTDOGS FOR HIS MAJESTY

ROOSEVELT KEEPS IT SIMPLE FOR GEORGE VI

From 7-12 June 1939 King George VI and Queen Elizabeth made an important visit to the United States - it was the first time that a reigning British monarch had stepped on American soil. It was also a period of great turmoil back in Europe as war was looming on the horizon. While President Franklin D Roosevelt wasn't in a position to promise military support, he could see what was coming and was hugely in favour of closer diplomatic ties to Britain as a gateway to Europe. With isolationist and anti-British sentiment to contend with, Roosevelt meticulously planned the state visit to build up George VI in the eyes of the American public.

It was with this in mind that a simple picnic was organised, during which hotdogs were served. The meal was enjoyed by the king and queen at the Hyde Park residence of the president, where he also served cold turkey, Virginia ham, cranberry jelly, salad, strawberry shortcake and many other simple foods along with coffee, beer and sodas. *The New York Times* headline the next day read "KING TRIES HOTDOG AND ASKS FOR MORE". The humble hotdog proved to be an important step in building the 'special relationship'.

ROYAL CONTROVERSIES

STATE VISITS WERE NOT WITHOUT THEIR HICCUPS

Although Elizabeth II was a successful ambassador for the UK abroad and hostess of the nation at home, royal state visits could often feature embarrassing or controversial moments. Prince Philip was notorious for his numerous 'gaffs' on foreign trips, which often required quite a lot of apologising as cultural insensitivity or misplaced quips got him into trouble. An infamous 1986 visit to China during which he spoke with British students springs to mind, but is probably best not repeated here.

In the other direction, there have been plenty of controversial visiting heads of state in Britain. Several despotic leaders were courted during the Cold War, such as Mobutu Sese Seko (then president of Zaire), President Suharto (Indonesia) and Romanian communist leader Nicolae Ceausescu, who the British government hoped to draw towards the West. Her Majesty allegedly disliked him so much she hid behind a bush while walking her dogs to avoid running into him on his morning walk.

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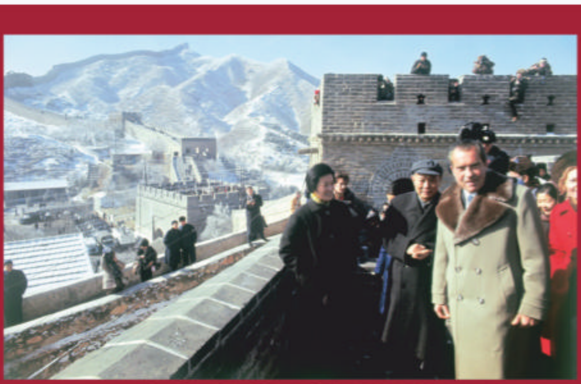
THE SHANNON INCIDENT

THE STATE VISIT THAT WASN'T

On 30 September 1994 Boris Yeltsin was expected to begin a historic state visit to Ireland. Things didn't quite go as planned, though. Awaiting the Russian president at Shannon Airport, County Clare, were Irish Taoiseach Albert Reynolds, his wife Kathleen, two cabinet ministers, several MPs, an Irish army guard of honour and a military band. Despite the expected arrival time, the Russian plane circled the airport for an additional hour before finally landing, and when it did the Russian president didn't emerge.

Yeltsin was returning from a trip to meet President Bill Clinton in America and after waiting for another 30 minutes, the Irish delegation was told the Russian leader was 'indisposed'. Refused entry to the plane, Reynolds was ultimately offered a meeting with the travelling Russian Deputy Prime Minister Oleg Soskovets, who apologised on behalf of Yeltsin, saying he was "too tired after a 17-hour flight." Taken as a snub by some, publicly the Irish delegation accepted the explanation, although rumours quickly spread that Yeltsin was intoxicated. Back home the Russians had more dire conspiracies, such as a potential coup taking place. Upon landing in Moscow, Yeltsin finally emerged and claimed he had overslept.



NIXON IN CHINA

A GROUNDBREAKING DIPLOMATIC VISIT

It came to be known as the 'week that changed the world', although that grandiose title may be overstating things somewhat. From 21 February 1972 and lasting for one week, President Richard Nixon was the first sitting US president to set foot in mainland China. After 25 years of isolation and no diplomatic relations, the two nations were finally talking at the highest level. During his stay Nixon visited several major cities, saw the Great Wall, attended cultural events and met with Chairman Mao Zedong and Premier Zhou Enlai.

It was with the latter that the Shanghai communiqué was signed, outlining what has come to be known as the 'One China' policy that dominates US-China relations to this day. In the years since, the significance of this trip has been questioned, not least since formal diplomatic relations between the countries weren't normalised until 1979. Still, a subsequent trip to the Soviet Union that same year marked the beginning of détente between the Cold War powers and a new stage of the standoff between East and West.

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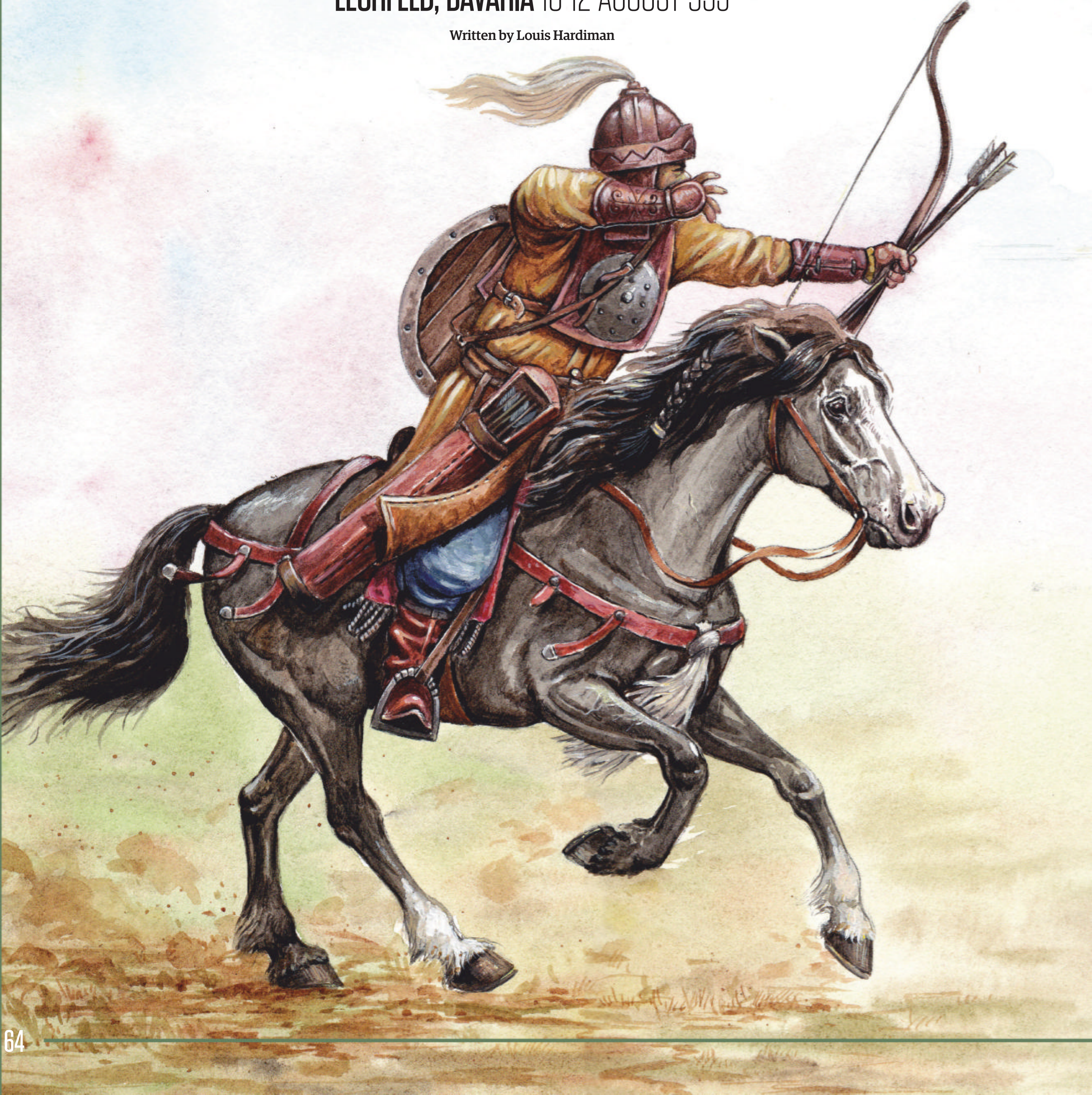
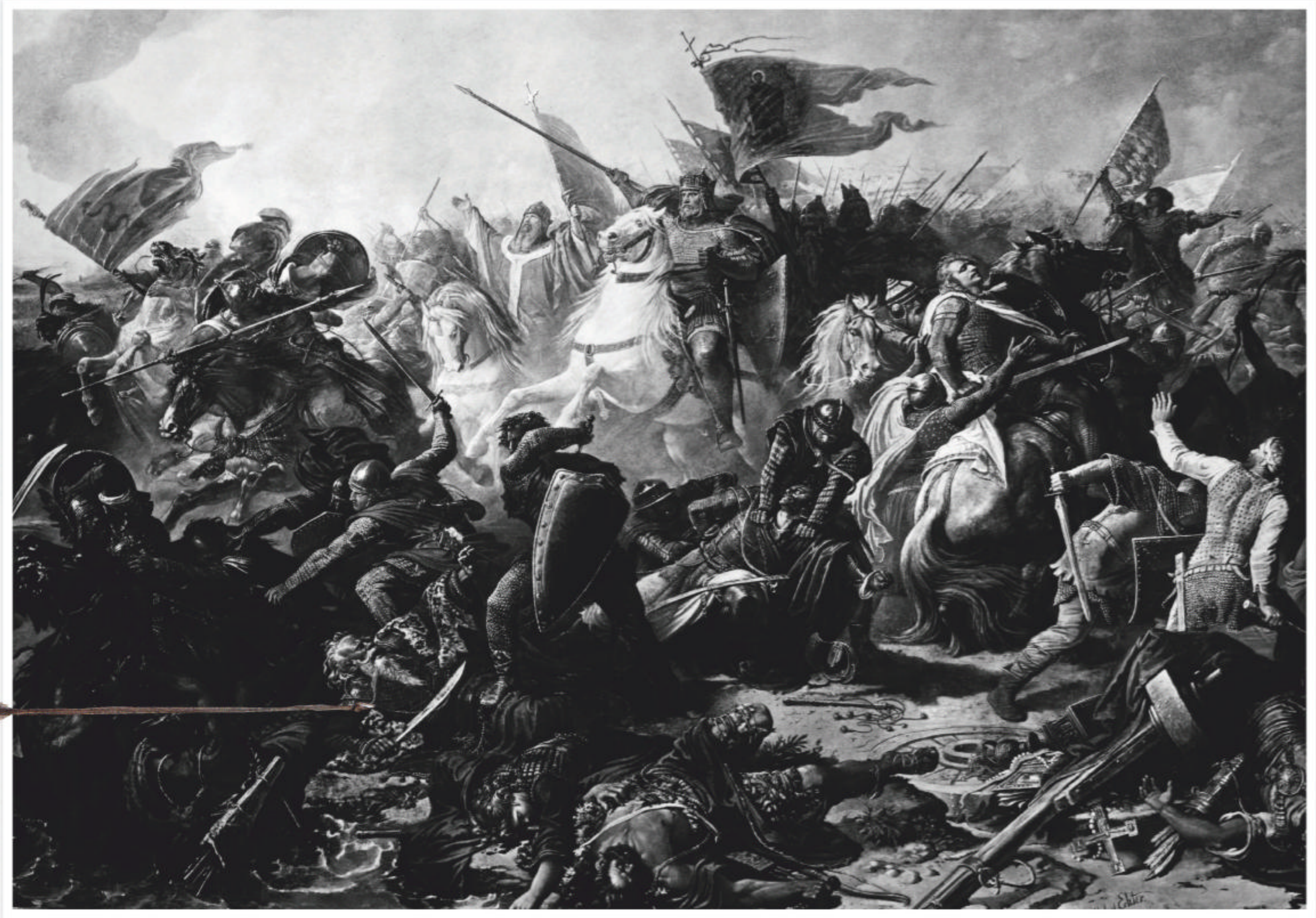
LECHFELD

LECHFELD, BAVARIA 10-12 AUGUST 955

Written by Louis Hardiman





Otto the First's East Francian kingdom was in the grips of a three-year domestic crisis, wrestling for power with troublesome nobles and a Slavic revolt in the north. The nomadic Hungarian Magyar raiders viewed Otto's eastern territories with envy and saw opportunity among the disorder. Making a permanent incursion into Central Europe would allow for deeper, more profitable raids.

To ensure a successful invasion, the Hungarians had first to defeat the Ottonian army in East Francia (in the region now broadly spanning Germany and Austria), a challenging task for any force. For the past four decades, Saxon rulers like Otto had pioneered dominant heavy cavalry, which would later become an essential component of medieval warfare. Improvements in German armour and shields provided their men with robust protection from the bows of the Magyar horse archers. Even though the unrest had weakened Ottonian military might, their cavalry and heavy infantry would still be a formidable challenge and were highly motivated. A victory over the Magyars could put an end to the Afro-Eurasian raids that had ravaged Otto's forefathers since the fourth century.

The Magyars were unconcerned by Otto's threat, with the chance for untold riches being too tantalising to resist, and they entered East Francia in late spring 955. The chronicler Gerhard of Augsburg refers to the size of the Hungarian force as one that "no living person can remember having seen in any one region before". The Magyars brought siege engines and 6,000 labourers on the advance, a break from their tendency to enter enemy territory with minimal baggage. This heavy equipment slowed their progress to just 11 km a day, but they finally encircled the ancient city of Augsburg on 8 August 955. The sight of nomadic warriors was a fearsome yet familiar sight, but a new dread overcame the Augsburgers upon seeing the mangonels, onagers and ballistas. Damaged walls and a bare-bones garrison would not be enough to protect them.

It didn't take long for the Magyars to make their first assault on Augsburg. Their charge on the crumbling Eastern Gate was almost successful until Ulrich, the Bishop of Augsburg, stepped in. Wearing no armour and yelling out biblical passages, he led a counterattack. The Magyar commander fell, the Hungarians scattered, and heavy rain washed away the blood while Ulrich gave mass in the downpour. But the people of Augsburg knew that religious fervour alone could not protect them. The city's fall in a few days was inevitable.

Seizing Augsburg was not the Magyars' primary goal – not that this would have consoled the terrified population. Instead, the Hungarians wanted to goad Otto into attacking with his main army. Defeating Otto's force would end the Saxon line of rulers in East Francia and create a power vacuum for a Magyar Kingdom in Bavaria and Swabia. Word soon reached Augsburg that Otto had gathered a sizable force, combining his experienced Saxon retinue with an amalgamation of troops mustered while on the march. After a day's rest in Ulm on the banks of the Danube to the west, his men were bearing down on the invaders.

OTTO PREPARES FOR BATTLE

The Ottonian force had eight divisions. Three divisions in the vanguard were Bavarians, indigenous to the region under Magyar invasion and commanded by Henry I, Duke of Bavaria. They knew the lay of the land and could march 25km a day, but Henry I was seriously ill and had months to live. Behind them was a division of Franconians, commanded by Conrad the Red, Otto's son-in-law and former Duke of Lorraine. Conrad was in disgrace for his participation in a failed rebellion against Otto.

A division of Otto's veteran Saxons and Thuringians followed the Franconians ▶

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01 MAGYAR DECEPTION

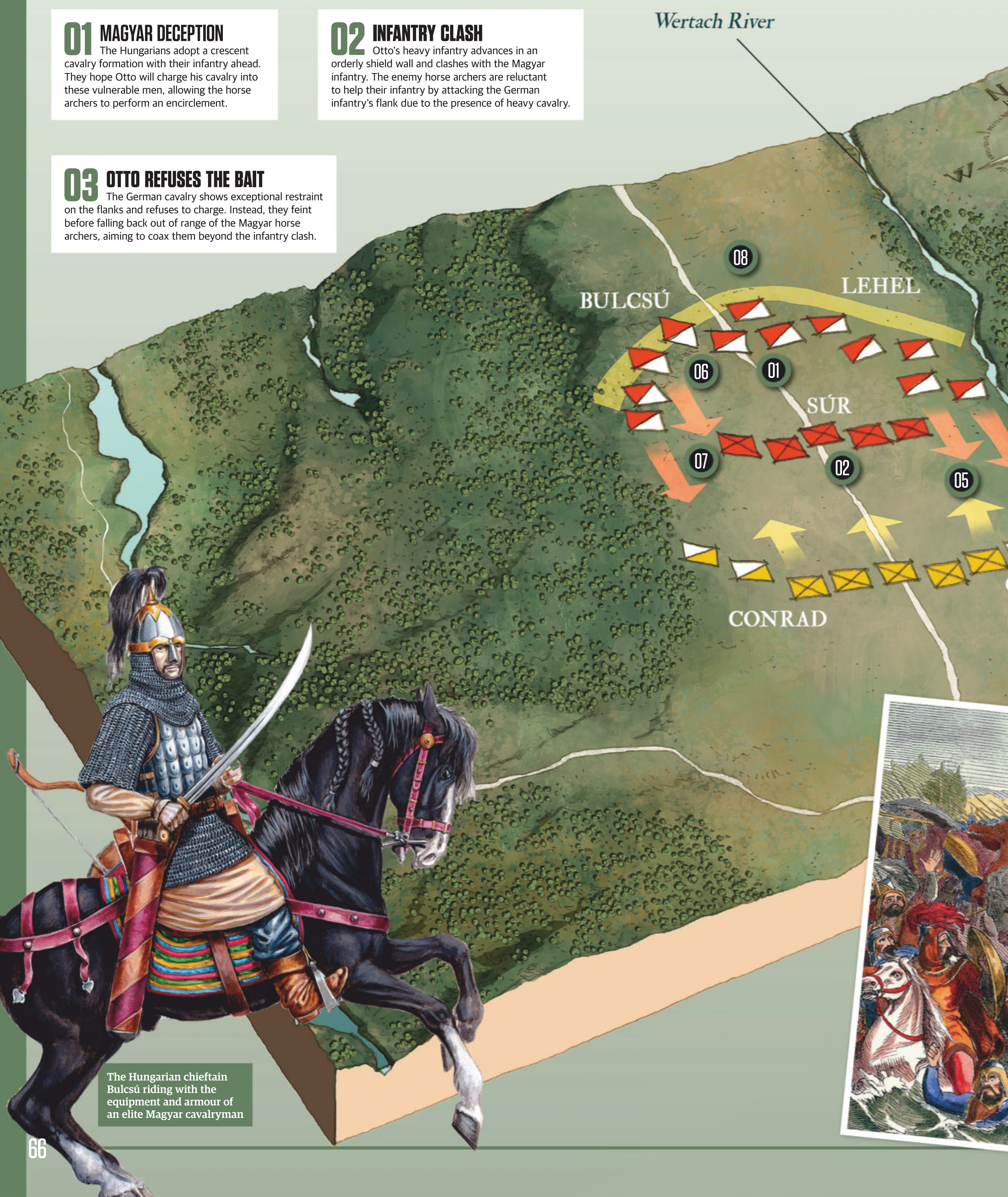
The Hungarians adopt a crescent cavalry formation with their infantry ahead. They hope Otto will charge his cavalry into these vulnerable men, allowing the horse archers to perform an encirclement.

02 INFANTRY CLASH

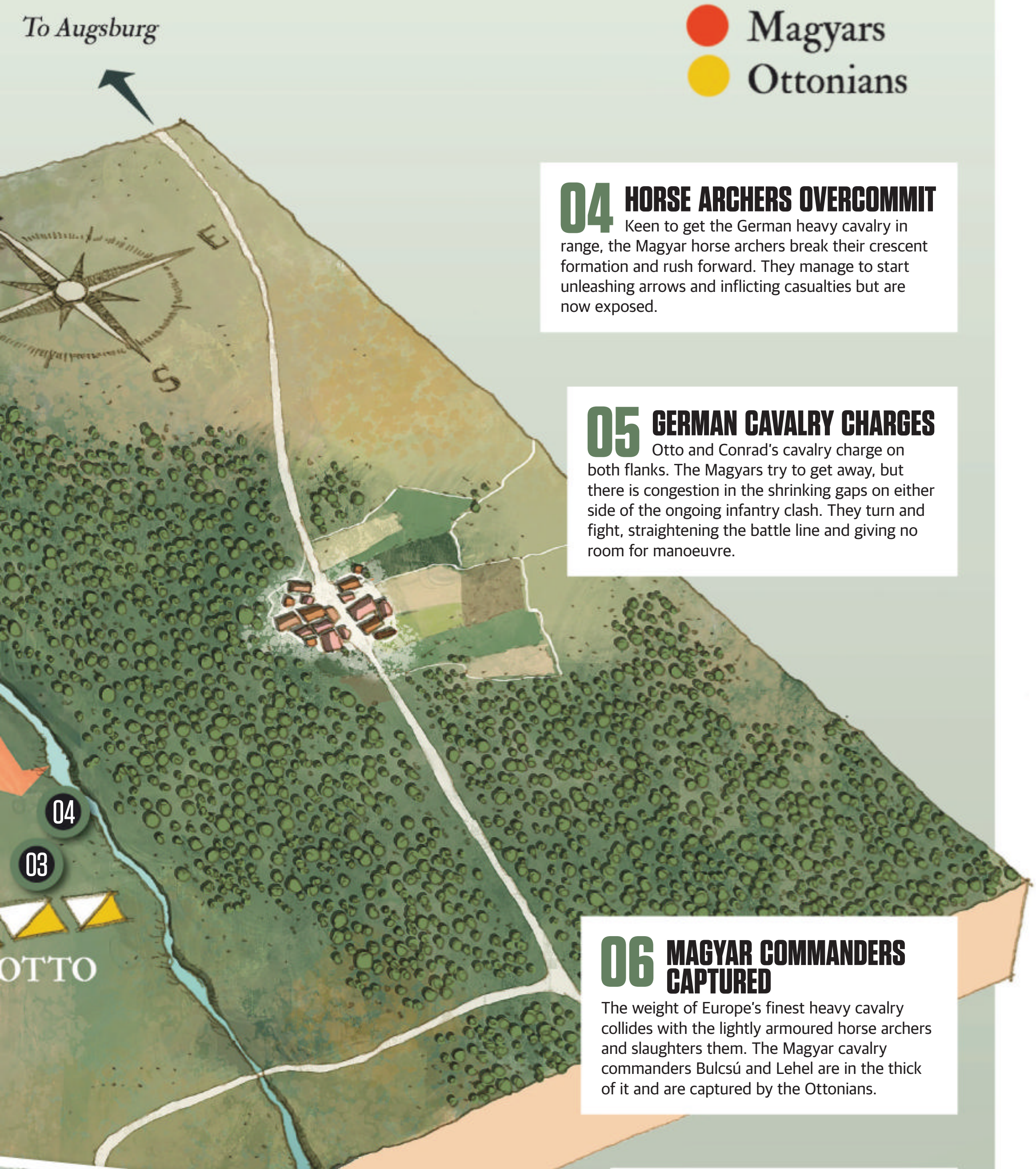
Otto's heavy infantry advances in an orderly shield wall and clashes with the Magyar infantry. The enemy horse archers are reluctant to help their infantry by attacking the German infantry's flank due to the presence of heavy cavalry.

03 OTTO REFUSES THE BAIT

The German cavalry shows exceptional restraint on the flanks and refuses to charge. Instead, they feint before falling back out of range of the Magyar horse archers, aiming to coax them beyond the infantry clash.



The Hungarian chieftain Bulcsú riding with the equipment and armour of an elite Magyar cavalryman



04 HORSE ARCHERS OVERCOMMIT

Keen to get the German heavy cavalry in range, the Magyar horse archers break their crescent formation and rush forward. They manage to start unleashing arrows and inflicting casualties but are now exposed.

05 GERMAN CAVALRY CHARGES

Otto and Conrad's cavalry charge on both flanks. The Magyars try to get away, but there is congestion in the shrinking gaps on either side of the ongoing infantry clash. They turn and fight, straightening the battle line and giving no room for manoeuvre.

06 MAGYAR COMMANDERS CAPTURED

The weight of Europe's finest heavy cavalry collides with the lightly armoured horse archers and slaughters them. The Magyar cavalry commanders Bulcsú and Lehel are in the thick of it and are captured by the Ottonians.

07 CONRAD THE RED KILLED

The German cavalry victory is decisive but they still suffer heavy and important casualties. The most noteworthy is Conrad the Red, who is struck in the neck by an arrow and killed instantly.

08 MAGYARS RETREAT

Leaderless and collapsing against the heavily armoured opponent, the Magyars break off and retreat. They head north to Augsburg in an orderly fashion and residents are terrified they will besiege the town once more. However, the nomads' stop is brief before continuing east.

09 NO CHASE

The Germans maintain their discipline and hold the line rather than giving chase to the faster Magyars. They make their way to Augsburg at a gentle pace before beginning their pursuit the following morning.

and two Swabian divisions were behind, led by Burchard III. The rearguard included experienced Bohemians and was led by Boleslaus I, Duke of Bohemia. Boleslaus I was feared throughout Otto's army and carried the moniker 'The Cruel' after murdering his elder brother Wenceslaus I on the path to dukedom.

The Magyars hoped Otto would take the main road northeast from Ulm before heading south to Augsburg. He would emerge onto the northern end of the Lechfeld, a broad steppe-like plain longside the Lech River. The Magyars had used this land and their excellent manoeuvrability to great effect during the First Battle of Lechfeld 45 years earlier. A feinted retreat drew out Franconian and Swabian horsemen, who were massacred once their horses tired. This victory, along with the Battle of Pressburg (907), preceded decades of nomadic raids and allowed the Magyars to enter Franconia for the first time.

Otto was wise to the Magyars' desire to do battle on open ground. While the north of the Lechfeld was broad, its south was much narrower, hemmed in by cliffs and forests to the west and the River Lech to the east. It was here that Otto would face up to the nomadic incursion by restricting their manoeuvrability. To reach the less-open ground, Otto crossed the Danube and followed the old Roman road east. The dense Rauherforst forest surrounding this road would protect his column from Magyar hit-and-run attacks but disgruntlement spread among some of the rank and file, worried that they had little room for manoeuvre in case of an ambush. Such a threat grew immeasurably when the traitor Berchtold of Risinesburg slipped off to the Hungarian camp and passed on news of Otto's plan.

THE MAGYAR RAID

The Magyar army moved out of the Augsburg encirclement to meet the advancing threat, leaving behind enough men to protect the siege engines. A small contingent of Augsburgers, numbering approximately 500 men, managed to sneak out of the loose siege to reinforce Otto's army. While the main nomad force made their way onto the Lechfeld, bands of mounted archers skirted around the Rauherforst, crossing the Zusam and Schmutter rivers, before concealing themselves. They watched patiently as Otto's column marched by until the forest swallowed up every division, but not the baggage train. These carts could easily be overturned to block the road, ending any fast-moving attack.

Magyar riders fell upon the Bohemian rearguard, who were already exhausted from their hard march towards Augsburg. These men panicked as arrows slammed into their comrades and fled into the woods in a collapse that took just minutes. The Hungarians pressed on, routing the Swabians with similar ferocity. Guards waiting on the walls of Augsburg could hear the screams of dying Germans and the cries of their horses. The Magyars planned to continue their attack along

▶

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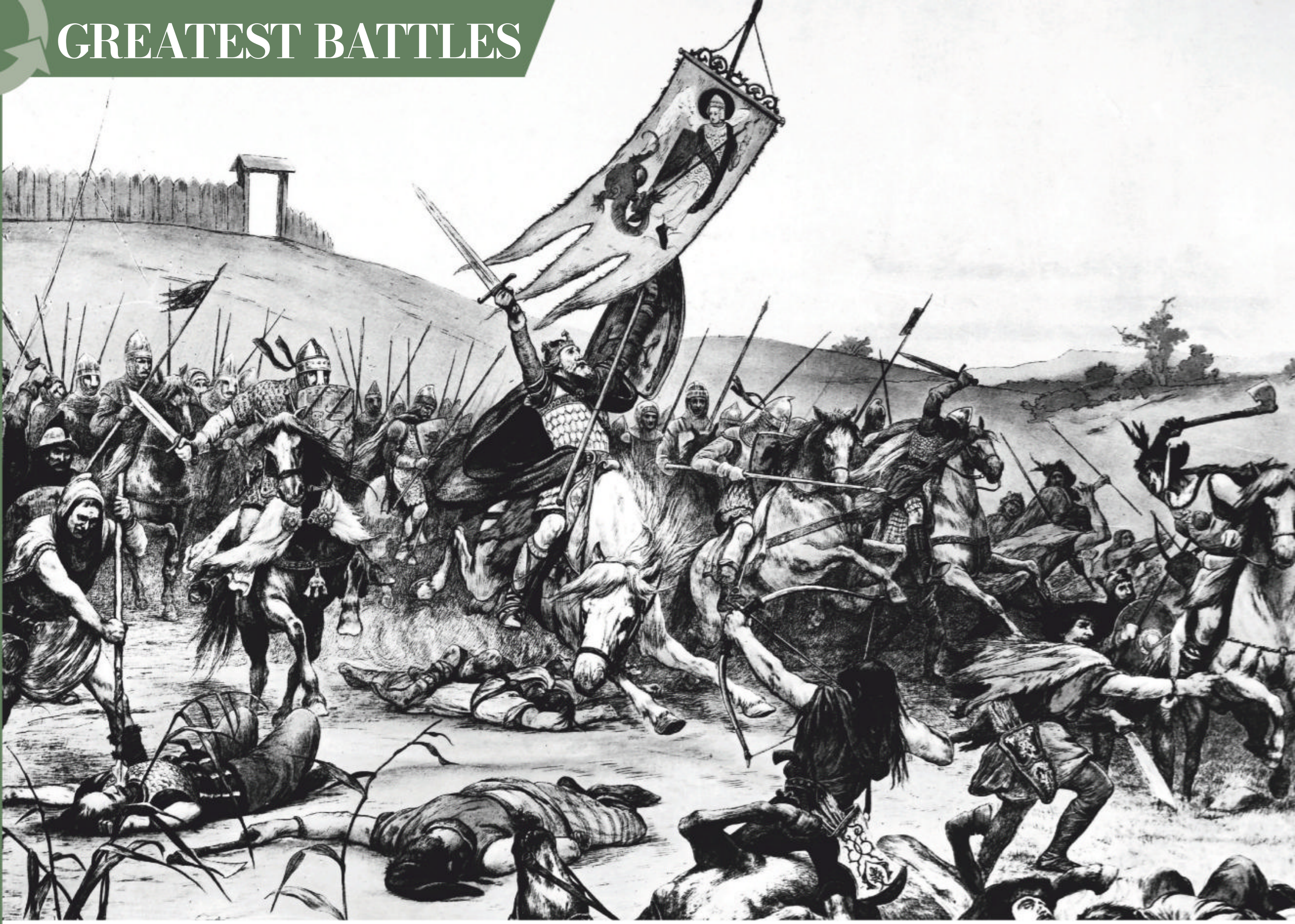


ABOVE A 19th century lithograph shows the dominance of Otto's cavalry against the armourless Hungarians

the Ottonian column, pincering it within the Rauherforst and provoking a mass collapse. In a slip of discipline emblematic of the Magyars' decline, they fixated on Otto's baggage train, turning around to conduct a raid. Otto sent Conrad the Red's Franconian cavalry back to deal with the threat so that his main force could carry on to the Lechfeld.

The Magyars, distracted by the spoils of war, failed to notice the approaching danger charging at full tilt towards them, driven on by Conrad's desire to salvage his reputation at any cost. When the Franconians reached the Hungarians, the enemy was still dismounted and fell before the weight of a thunderous charge. Conrad's victorious men returned to the column once the last of their enemy had been finished off, even managing to restore order among some of the Ottonians routed from the initial ambush. His actions prevented the encirclement of the German forces and made heroes of the inexperienced youths that followed Conrad into battle.

> SUCH WAS THE SEVERITY OF THE DEFEAT THAT THE MAGYARS ABANDONED THEIR NOMADIC WAY OF LIFE

THE MAIN BATTLE

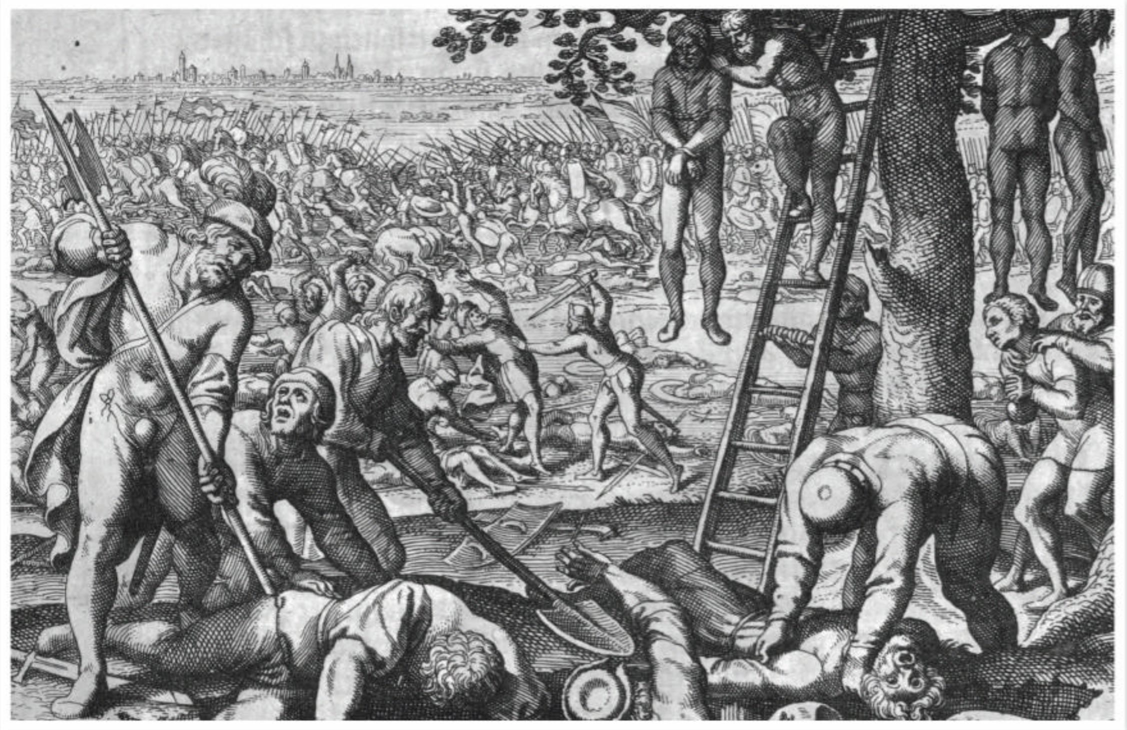
Otto began to emerge onto the Lechfeld south of the Magyar position. The exact way that he secured victory remains unclear as the primary account of the battle, written by the chronicler Widukind of Corvey, provides little detail. Scholars have built an understanding of the clash based on what we know about the opposing forces, battlefield and military conventions which would have influenced Otto. European commanders of the Ottonian era were particularly guided by Vegetius' *Epitome of Military Science*.

Widukind writes that Otto began the day with a rousing speech partially inspired by the *Book of the Maccabees*, an account from the *Old Testament* of the Jewish rebellion against the Seleucid Empire. Having cast himself as a similar character to the Jewish commander Judas Maccabaeus, Otto finished by emphasising that despite the numerical superiority of the Magyars, his men had "better arms" and would win.

In good spirits, the Ottonian army pushed north. Conrad's cavalry held the left, the infantry the centre and Otto's experienced royal cavalry the right. In front of him were the Magyar infantry, lightly armed pedites. They had been intentionally exposed as behind them were the Hungarian horse archers in a crescent formation. Although the infantry would be routed if Otto's cavalry charged, they would fall back into the crescent. Should the Ottonian cavalry chase them, they would easily be surrounded by horse archers and massacred.

Instead of the full-tilt cavalry charge expected by the Hungarians, Otto ordered his three Bavarian infantry units to advance in a steady shield-wall formation against the pedites. The Bavarians had to absorb just one volley of arrows before they reached the enemy, whom they greatly outclassed. One by one, the pedites' formations broke and received no help from the horseman, who feared an Ottonian cavalry charge at any moment. Meanwhile, Otto's cavalry held back on the flanks and used feinted charges, hoping to drag the Magyar horse archers out of their crescent formation.

The Magyar horsemen took the bait to get the Germans into range. The Ottonians accepted the enfilade and high casualties as they charged as soon as the horse archers were past the infantry. On the right, Otto



ABOVE Later depiction of the slaughter of the Magyars following their defeat at Lechfeld

led the attack, raising the Holy Lance of Constantine aloft. (This relic was believed to have stabbed Christ's side during his crucifixion.) The Magyars had funnelled too many men through the bottlenecks either side of the infantry clash and now couldn't use their speed to get away. The Germans caught the panicking horse archers and pushed until the crescent formation became a line. Manoeuvring was no longer important, only the fighting capabilities of each man, and the advantage was with the Ottonain swords, lances and heavy armour against the Magyar sabres and lightweight armour. The usually deadly Hungarian bows were rendered ineffective in the crush.

Magyar riders fell in droves and their commanders were captured. Conrad pushed the enemy behind the infantry clash on his flank and now the Magyars faced a new risk: if Conrad could wheel round, their entire force would be encircled and destroyed. However, their centre was finally able to break away and retreat and the horse archers followed in an orderly fashion.

MAGYAR RETREAT

Smoke carried the scent of burning flesh over the Lechfeld; some pedites had escaped to nearby barns, which were set alight by Otto's men. The surviving Magyars fell back in good order, but their pace was conspicuously slow. The Hungarians hoped to draw Otto's men into a reckless charge. The Magyar elite horse archers had still not been destroyed and would have the advantage if allowed to use their full manoeuvrability. Otto forbade his exhausted troops from making this fatal mistake.

The Ottonians had suffered significant casualties, including Conrad the Red. Having distinguished himself on the Lechfeld, he received a lavish funeral at Worms Cathedral, an honour usually reserved for bishops and kings. Another noteworthy casualty was Bishop Ulrich's brother, Count Dietpald, who had commanded the detachment from Augsburg to reinforce Otto's army.

When the Magyars retreated to their siege camp, Bishop Ulrich saw the horse archers returning in such good order that he believed they had been victorious and wanted to resume the siege. However, the Hungarians stopped only briefly and continued to the east. Otto followed soon after with a triumphant ride at the head of the German column. They took the Hungarians' abandoned camp, liberating their prisoners and executing the captured Magyars before bedding down for the night.

As Otto's bruised and bloodied men lit their campfires and celebrated a famous victory, they looked up to see the 'tears of St Lawrence' through gaps in the gathering storm clouds. This annual celestial event occurs when Earth passes through the tail of the Swift-Tuttle comet, creating a spectacular shower of shooting stars. According to legend, they are St Lawrence's tears falling to Earth on the anniversary of his martyrdom to remind believers of his passionate faith. St Lawrence's tears fell for several days after, coursing through the atmosphere as, piece by piece, the Germans destroyed the Hungarian army.

AFTERMATH

Historian Charles Bowless calls the Second Battle of Lechfeld a "bloody draw". The true victory came during Otto's chase, which began the following morning. The Magyars had a head-start, but Otto had sent word to garrisons at the nine major fortresses between Augsburg and the eastern border to close all river crossings, tributaries and roads. The outposts had been constructed by Otto's father, Henry I of Saxony, to provide defence-in-depth against enemy invaders. Without such fortifications, the raiders could easily have made an ordered retreat against the slow pursuing forces.

The Magyars were without leadership and separated into disparate groups, each hoping to make a dozen river crossings and travel the 320km back to friendly territory. Storms followed much of the Magyar retreat and they were mostly unable to defend themselves as their composite bows often became unglued in damp weather.

Over the following weeks, the Magyar army was annihilated, as described in gruesome detail by Widukind. In one particularly brutal instance, a Magyar band reached a river, hoping to ford it. However, a downpour on 10 August turned it into a torrent. The Magyars began to negotiate the bottleneck when forces from Sunderburg and Freising attacked. Those at the front of the column rushed to make the fording and drowned.

Other Magyars attempted to avoid crossings on foot by commandeering ferry boats, either through force or by bribing their owners. But they didn't account for the ferrymen's loyalty to Otto and many were cut down before they could show their coin. The few Hungarians that the Ottonians didn't kill on the spot were maimed and sent home, unrecognisable from their injuries. The Franconians took a similarly merciless approach to the captured commanders, Bulcsú, Lehel and Súr, who were initially spared and taken to Regensburg. This was not to ransom them back to the Magyars as was convention. Instead, they were hanged in public.

Such was the severity of the defeat that the Magyars abandoned their nomadic way of life, finally being taken into the fold of Christianity. The Hungarian Kingdom began, led by King Stephen I, and it developed into a staunch defender of Christian Europe, repelling the Mongols and Ottomans to the east for centuries. Meanwhile, Lechfeld was the making of Otto, who used the battle to cement his position as Europe's foremost protector. Negotiations with Pope John XII led to Otto becoming the Emperor of Rome on 2 February 962, reviving the Holy Roman Empire. Otto began to be considered a 'new Charlemagne', earning the moniker 'Otto the Great'. Lechfeld also had a seismic impact on military circles as word spread of how knightly cavalry could dominate eastern Europe's nomads, beginning centuries of increasingly heavily armoured battles throughout Europe.

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FATHEEER!

WHAT IF...

PHILIP II HAD LOST THE BATTLE OF CHAERONEA?

If Philip II of Macedon had been defeated at Chaeronea in 338 BCE the history of the entire world may have looked very different

INTERVIEW WITH

© Murray Dahm

MURRAY DAHM

Dahm is an expert in ancient military history and has written numerous articles and books on the topic, including on the conquest of Persia. His book *Finis Britanniae* is available now from Amberley Publishing.

The Battle of Chaeronea, fought by the forces of Macedon against an alliance of Greek states, in particular Athens and Thebes, in late August 338 BCE, ended in an overwhelming victory for Philip II of Macedon. Thereafter, Macedon dominated the city states of mainland Greece. It was a watershed moment and one of the most significant battles fought in the ancient world. The victory saw Thebes, Athens and other Greek states cowed, and it cleared the way for Macedonian plans to invade the Persian Empire - this would be completed by Philip's son, Alexander, between 334 and 325 BCE.

How significant was the battle and would a different result have changed history that drastically?

The significance of the battle, and Macedon's victory, really cannot be underestimated: it changed the course of ancient Greek history. As such, a different result would have likewise meant a completely different course for the subsequent history of ancient Greece. It is almost inestimable how much things might have changed.

What would a Macedonian defeat have meant?

By 338 BCE, Philip's advance into mainland Greece had been going on for some years. He had already come into conflict with Athens and Thebes. Victory at Chaeronea meant there was no one to stand in his way to take over all the states and impose pro-Macedonian governments. A loss at Chaeronea would have halted this advance and influence, and it may have encouraged more Greek states to join the opposition to Macedon's influence. If Philip and even [his son] Alexander had died in such a defeat then Greece would never have experienced Macedonian domination. The Macedonian Argead royal line would probably have petered out (just as it actually did after Alexander's death in 323 BCE). The Persian Empire would probably not have been invaded, much less conquered, and the entire Hellenistic era - the Macedonian-influenced history of much of the Near East (encompassing modern-day Egypt, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Turkey, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India) - would never have happened. If Philip had died and Alexander lived, there is no guarantee he would have been in a strong position. When he did succeed in 336 BCE his father had enjoyed more success and he had more experience at his side. An unsuccessful new king in 338 BCE could easily have been toppled.

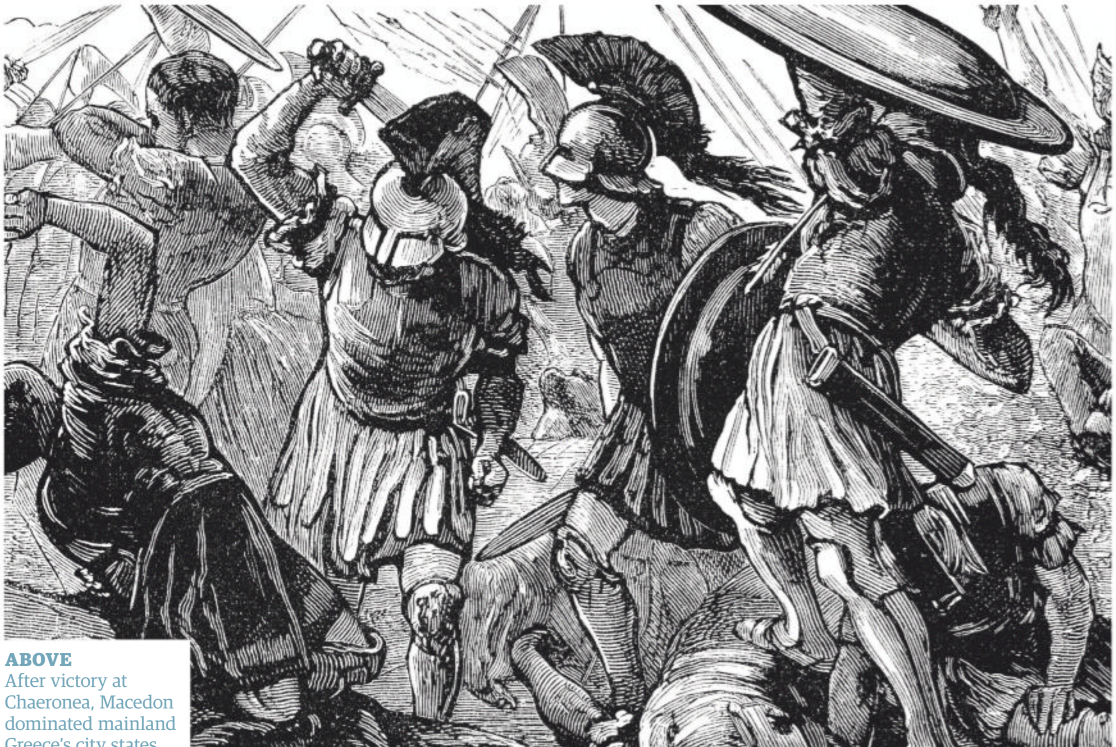
What would it have meant for Greece?

The alliance between Athens and Thebes in 338 BCE was entirely unexpected. Although they had fought beside one another before, they were historic rivals

▶

RIGHT
The Philippeion erected at Olympia to commemorate Philip's victory

All images: © Adobe Stock, © Alamy, © Getty Images



ABOVE
After victory at Chaeronea, Macedon dominated mainland Greece's city states

BELOW
The Athenian orator Demosthenes was a leader of the anti-Macedonian faction at Athens

and there was hatred between the two states stretching back more than a century. Athens had been defeated by Thebes in 362 BCE, when Athens sided with Sparta against Theban domination. Now both sides joined against the common threat of Macedon. Some sources only name these two but others (the orator Demosthenes, for instance) names Euboeans, Achaeans, Corinthians, Thebans, Megarians, Leucadians and Corcyraeans. In many ways the alliance against Macedon's invasion was a unifier, just as the alliance against Persia had been in the fifth century BCE. Given prior Greek history, however, after a combined victory, the Greek states would have probably soon fallen to bickering and fighting among themselves once more. This might have led to another period of Athenian domination or, perhaps, one of Theban domination of the other mainland Greek states.

What about Sparta?

Sparta's influence was already on the wane after two decisive defeats at the hands of the Thebans in 371 BCE (Leuctra) and 362 BCE (Mantinea). What is more, Sparta's manpower and political power had so drastically declined that any recovery was unlikely.

Could Macedon had bounced back from a defeat?

In all probability, a defeat for Macedon at Chaeronea would've been followed by an invasion of Macedon by a combined Athenian and Theban force to ensure that it couldn't [recover]. Even though Thebes was defeated at Chaeronea, in 335 BCE (so only three years later) it revolted from Macedonian control, and Alexander (by then king although he had only been on the throne for a year) took drastic action. He razed Thebes to the ground. This was a frightening precedent - he wiped a city with a vast history from the face of the earth. This made sure that other cities stayed compliant for the remainder of his reign (as soon as he died, they did revolt - but were defeated by Alexander's successors). It is unlikely that the Thebans or Athenians would have destroyed the Macedonian capital Pella but it would have shifted the war to Macedon.

What would a Macedonian defeat have meant for developments in warfare?

The Macedonian infantry phalanx was inexorable and would remain so - it was the tool used to conquer Greece and then Persia. It then became the dominant infantry formation in the Eastern Mediterranean until the second century BCE. If it had been stopped at Chaeronea, we would not have seen the Macedonian phalanx again - it would not have conquered Persia or become the formation of the Hellenistic kingdoms. In many ways, Greek warfare would have remained conservative: hoplite phalanxes on the Athenian and Theban model. Their arms and armour had remained relatively unchanged since Thebes' victories over Sparta in the 370s and 360s BCE. A victory of those arms at Chaeronea would not have suggested that any change was necessary. The Thebans had been using a deeper formation and this may have become the norm, but other states (like Athens) had retained their age-old depths. Perhaps defeated Macedonians and some Thessalians would have come into mainland Greek warfare as cavalry. This might have had some influence although what Philip's phalanx showed was that it was the anvil to his cavalry's hammer - this was a tactic Alexander perfected in Persia. Defeat at Chaeronea would have meant that never came to pass.

What else might a Macedonian defeat at Chaeronea have meant?

The tribes and states beyond Macedon (Illyria, Paeonia and the Thracians) had seen significant campaigns by Philip before he turned south into Greece. In this way he had secured his rear and was under no threat from those states when he was preoccupied with Greece. He also had hostages and marriage alliances with these states (Olympias,

> “IF THE MACEDONIAN INFANTRY PHALANX HAD BEEN STOPPED AT CHAERONEA WE WOULD NOT HAVE SEEN IT AGAIN”

Alexander's mother, was a princess from Epirus). A Macedonian defeat at Chaeronea (especially if Philip and/or Alexander had been killed) would have probably meant these states would have taken a chance to revolt or invade (either in alliance or singly). Before Philip had come to the throne (358 BCE) they had dominated Macedon so would have looked to reassert that dominance. All of this (and with an Athenian/Theban invasion too) would have meant the Greek states became distracted by their own internal dissent. With Macedon defeated, Athenian orators would have shifted back to Thebes being the common enemy and there would eventually have been another war for control of Greece, probably between Athens and Thebes and their respective allies.

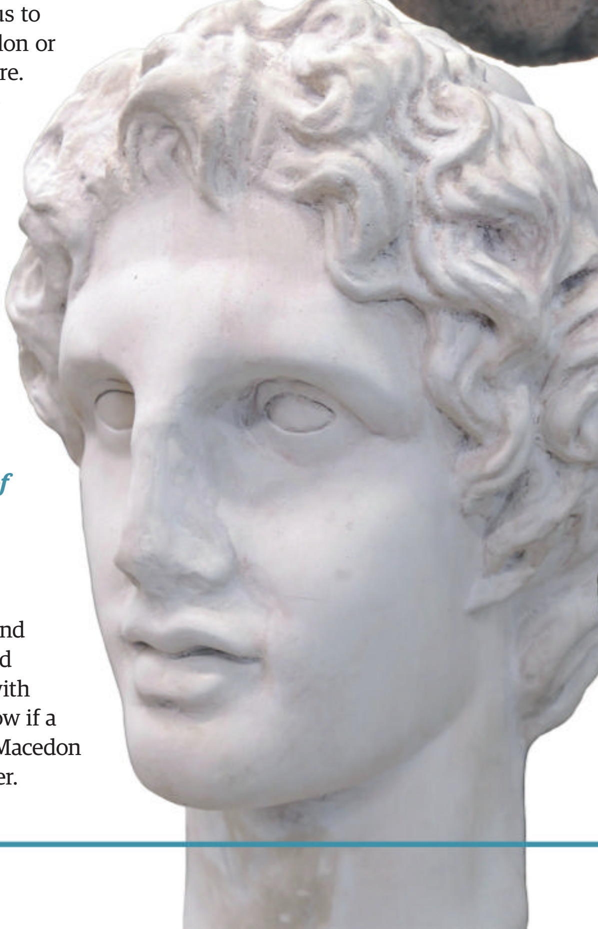
What about Persia?

It is unlikely that Persia would have been invaded had Macedon been defeated at Chaeronea; that victory opened the way for the Macedonian invasion of Persia - planned by Philip and implemented to great effect by Alexander. Other mainland Greek states would have been unlikely to want to dedicate their manpower to such a vast external undertaking. Perhaps an alliance, but it would have been fragile and fraught with divisions. Most Theban and Athenian politicians would have been preoccupied with internal matters, at most reestablishing a Theban or Athenian sphere of influence but one which would not have been so ambitious to consider conquering Babylon or toppling the Persian Empire. Likewise, Persia was in no position to invade Greece again; Artaxerxes III was poisoned in 336 BCE and Darius III came to power - he would probably have reigned for years longer if not defeated by Alexander (he was 50 years old when he died in 330 BCE).

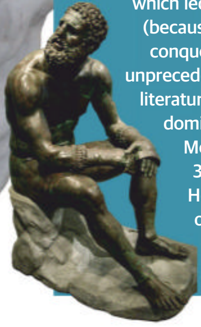
Would there have been any longer-term effects of a Macedonian defeat at Chaeronea?

Greece was invaded by rampaging Gallic tribes in 280 BCE led by Brennus, and the Macedonian armies had a very hard time dealing with this invasion. We can't know if a Greece not dominated by Macedon would have fared any better. Perhaps Greece would have fallen under Gallic sway? Likewise, the success of the Macedonian phalanx led to it being called in by the cities of southern Italy against Roman expansion (led by Pyrrhus of Epirus - actually a second cousin to Alexander the Great although he was probably born four years after Alexander's death). Would those cities have appealed to the Greek states with 'normal' hoplite phalanxes? Perhaps. In which case, Rome's conquest of Greece may have been accelerated. Or perhaps Greece (led by Thebes and Athens, or at least an ambitious adventurer from either city) may have had greater influence in Italy - if they had defeated an expanding Rome in the third century BCE, who knows? But that is a 'what if?' for another day!

RIGHT
Macedonian King Philip II was the mastermind of victory at Chaeronea



BELOW
Alexander commanded the cavalry on his father's left wing at the age of just 18



ALTERNATE REALITIES

SPECIFICS

338 BCE

MACEDON DOMINATES GREECE

Philip's advance to Chaeronea was the culmination of years of work establishing a stable Macedon then expanding its power. Thessaly fell under his control, and moving into Boeotia was the next logical step. Sparta stayed aloof, but the Greek states led by Athens and Thebes joined together to oppose him. This alliance by two erstwhile enemies proved futile: Philip defeated them at Chaeronea in a crushing victory that ensured he dominated Greece.

334-331 BCE

FALL OF THE PERSIAN EMPIRE

After Philip's assassination in October 336 BCE, Macedonian domination continued under his son Alexander. He attacked Persia to fulfil his father's ambitions. Winning victories in 334 (Granicus), 333 (Issus) and 331 BCE (Gaugamela), Alexander conquered the Persian Empire. He then advanced into Afghanistan and India, creating the largest empire the world had yet seen.

323-330 BCE

THE HELLENISTIC WORLD

Following the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BCE, his successors divided up his empire into their own kingdoms. Despite internecine warfare, these kingdoms and the self-confidence which led to their creation (because of Alexander's conquests) created an unprecedented period of art, literature and science. This dominated the eastern Mediterranean until 30 BCE, when the Hellenistic kingdom of Ptolemaic Egypt fell to Rome.

SPECULATION

338 BCE – UNKNOWN

ATHENS RESURGENT

Athens, along with Thebes, was the leader of the alliance against Macedon at Chaeronea. If the alliance had won, Athens would've been ideally placed to reinvigorate its domination of Greece and the Aegean. Athens may have been even greater if it had come to dominate Greece from the fourth century BCE onwards. Athenian literature, art and architecture may have had a resurgence and more of it may have survived.

338 BCE – UNKNOWN

THE PERSIAN EMPIRE

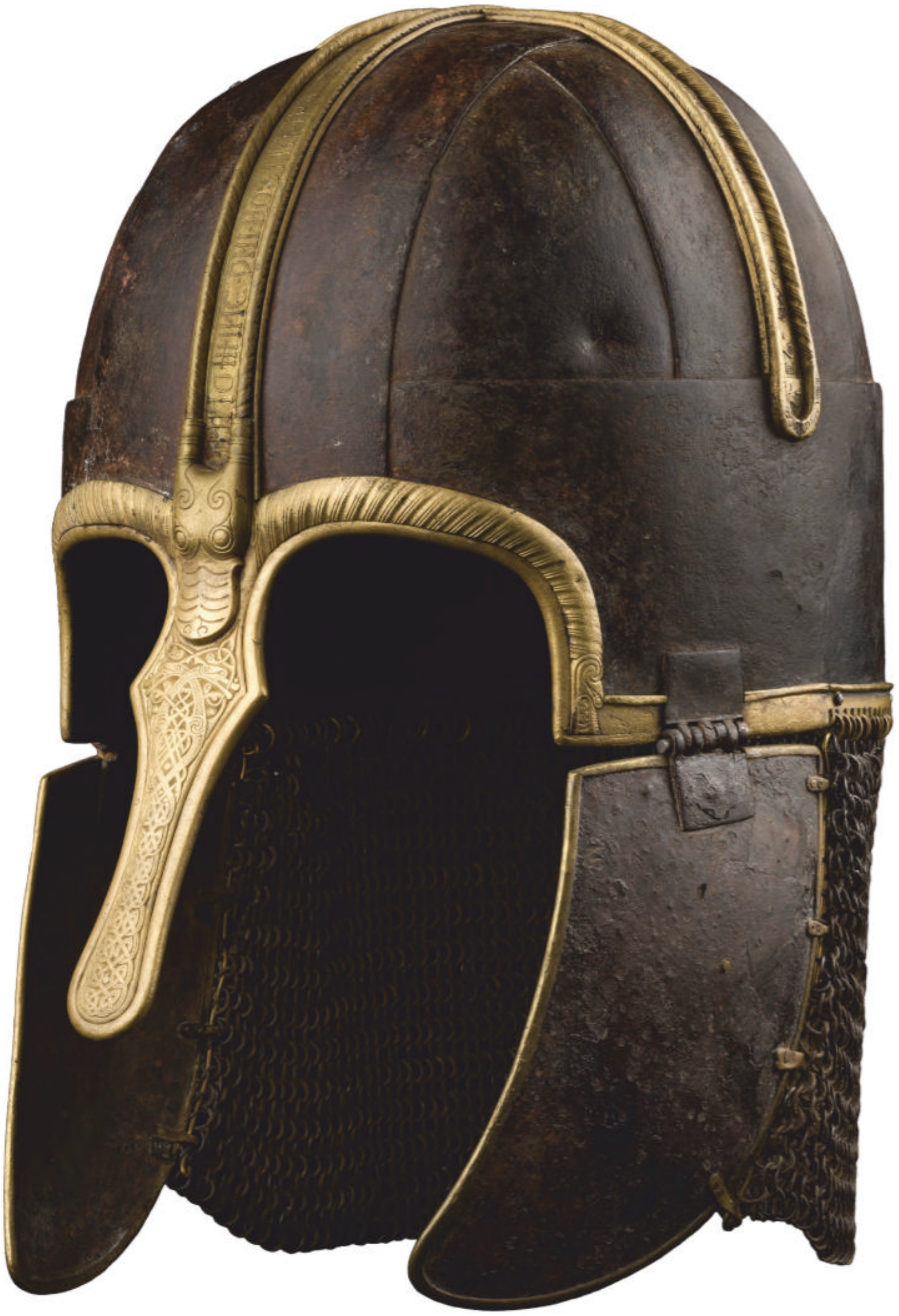
If Athens and Thebes had won, Macedonian forces would not have conquered the Persian Empire. It would not have been divided between Alexander's successors and probably not have splintered as it did into various entities, to become the Parthian Empire. With no Parthians, the Sasanian Persians would not have eventuated - the Achaemenid Empire might still have held sway through the Roman Empire and beyond.

338-264 BCE

A GREEK ROMAN EMPIRE

The domino effect of a different result at Chaeronea might have meant it was Thebes and Athens that came to the aid of the Italian cities against Roman expansion. A strong mainland Greece could have stopped Roman expansion, even expanded their Italian domains and conquered Rome. If the Roman Empire as we know it had been Greek not Roman, the world would look very different.

All images: © Alamy



YORK HELMET

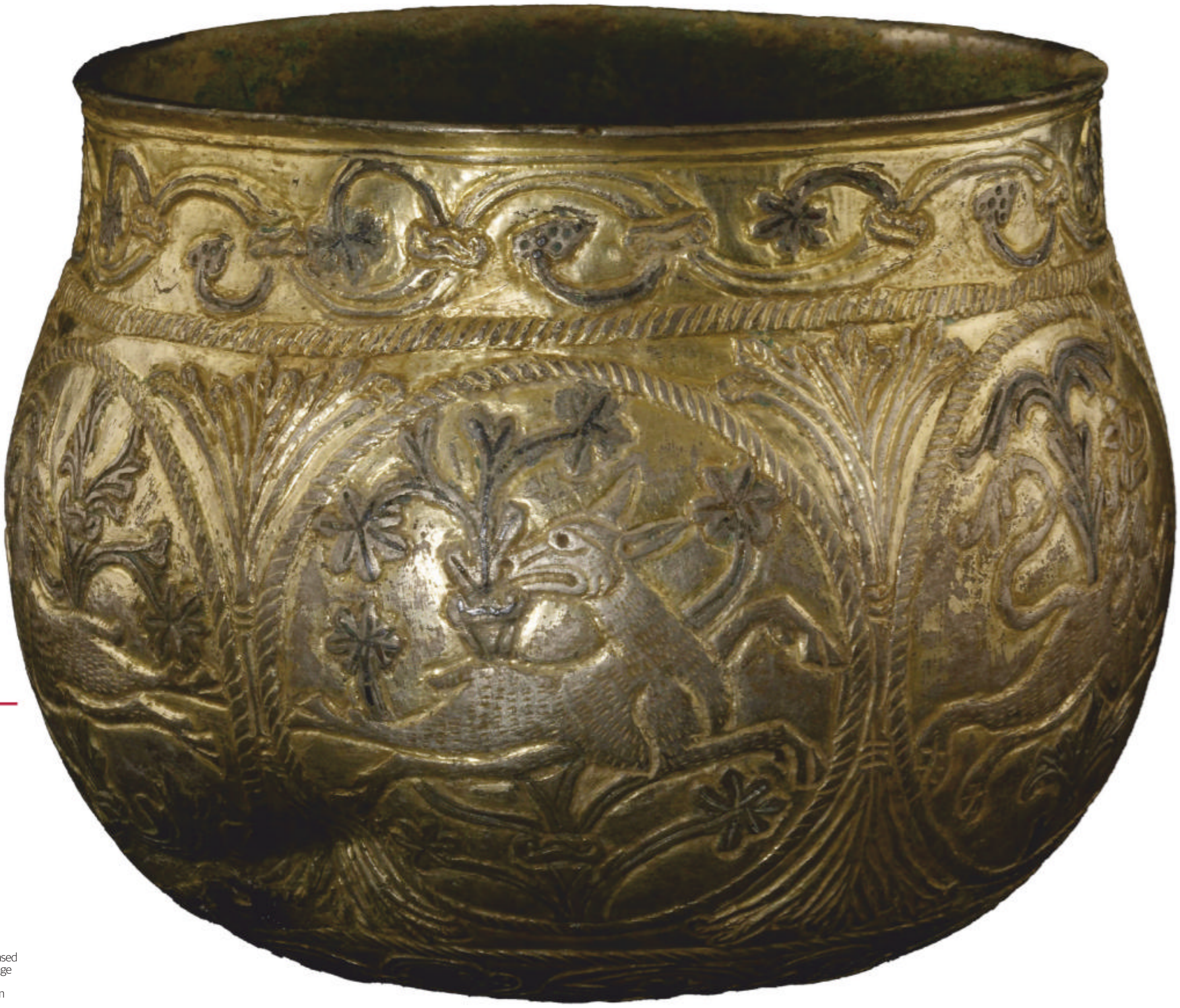
The famous helmet is the best-preserved Anglo-Saxon helmet still in existence. It was discovered in 1982 in York and dates to the 8th century. Made from iron and brass, an inscription on its band reveals it belonged to someone named Oshere – possibly a Northumbrian nobleman.

VIKINGS IN THE NORTH

A new exhibition examines the significance and impact of England's northerly Viking invasion

The northern English city of York has a long and turbulent history, and is notable for its importance in Roman and Viking eras in particular. In 866, the ancient city was conquered by Viking forces led by Ivan the Boneless and renamed Jorvik, becoming the base of power in the Viking territory of Danelaw during England's Viking Age. Now, a new exhibition highlights the history of the Vikings in the north of the country with an impressive collection of artefacts dating from 866 to 1066.

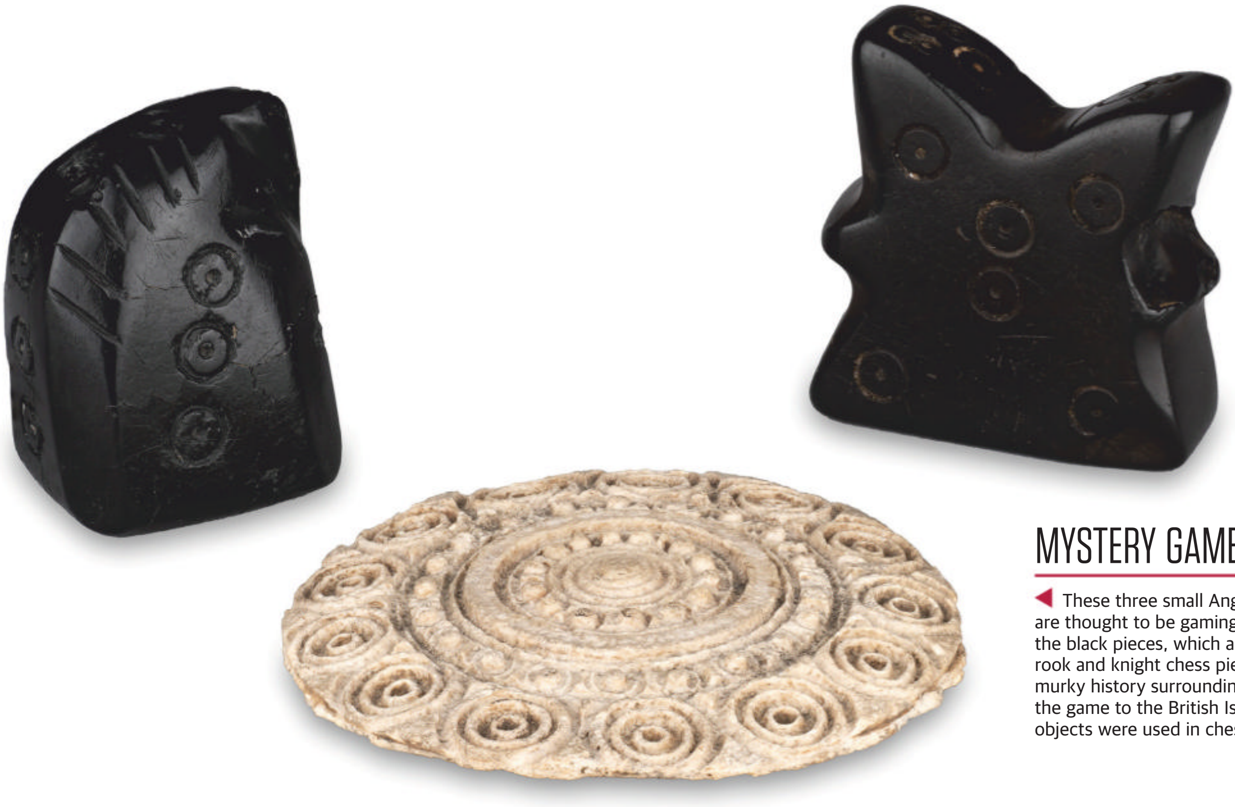
Viking North at the Yorkshire Museum in York has collated a vast array of archaeological finds from the Anglo-Scandinavian period to display the greatest Viking collection outside of London. The items include excavated discoveries in the north from the museum's own collection and from nearby sites, as well as the Vale of York hoard, which is co-owned with the British Museum. Dr Adam Parker, curator of archaeology at York Museums Trust, says the exhibition will tell the story of how "Anglo-Saxon kings were defeated, new territories and allegiances rose and fell, new identities were forged, and new international connections were made" during England's Viking period.



VIKING HOARDS

▶ When this magnificent silver vessel was discovered in 2007 as part of the Vale of York hoard, it contained 617 coins alongside gold and silver jewellery. The burial of the hoard has been dated to between 927 and 928. This magnificent cup, potentially made in the Carolingian Empire, is decorated with a hunting scene.

Acquired under the Treasure Act 1996. Purchased with the aid of grants from the National Heritage Memorial Fund, Art Fund (with a contribution from the Wolfson Foundation), British Museum Challenge Fund and Public Appeal, 2009.



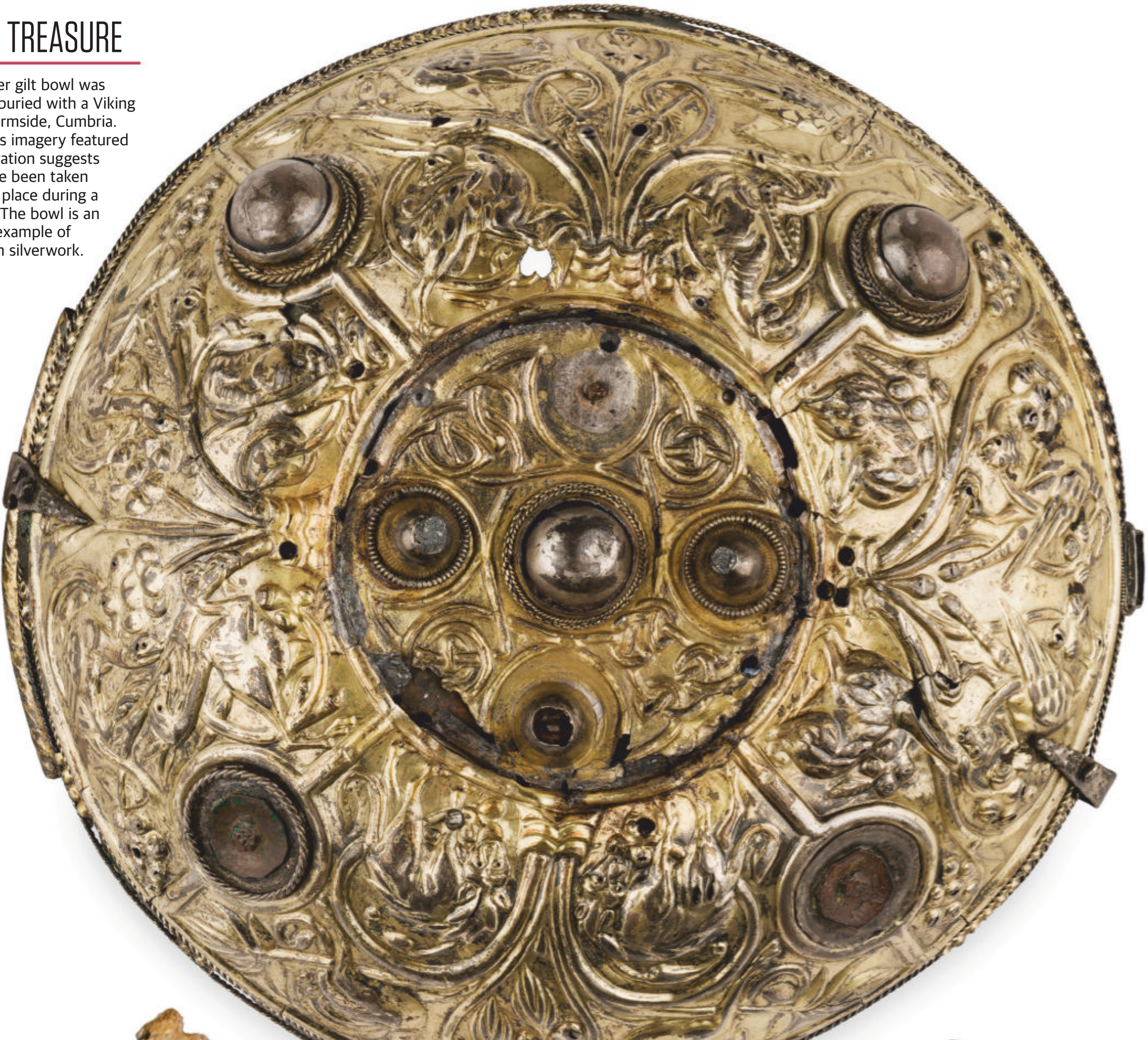
MYSTERY GAMES

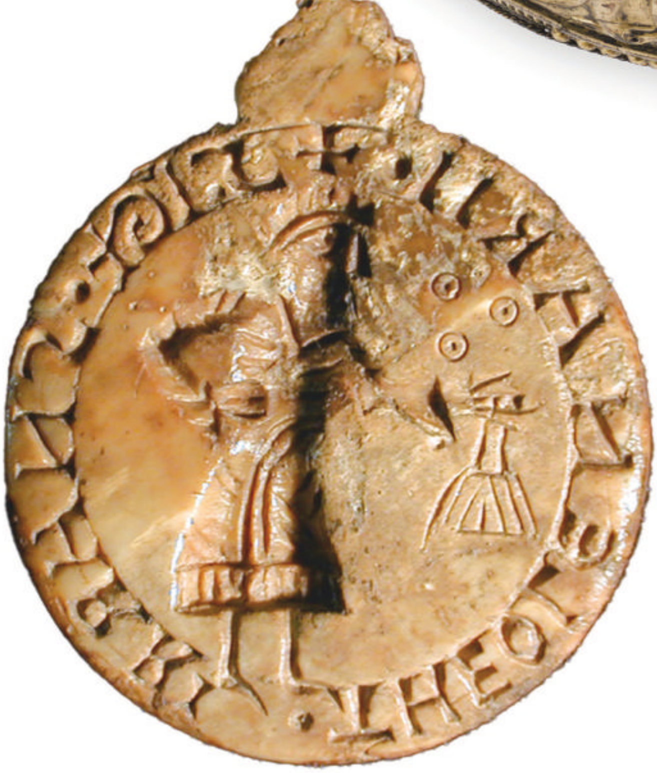
◀ These three small Anglo-Scandinavian artefacts are thought to be gaming pieces. It is possible that the black pieces, which are made from jet, are rook and knight chess pieces. However, due to the murky history surrounding the introduction of the game to the British Isles, it's unclear if these objects were used in chess.

All images: Courtesy of Antony Chappel-Ross for the York Museums Trust

BURIAL TREASURE

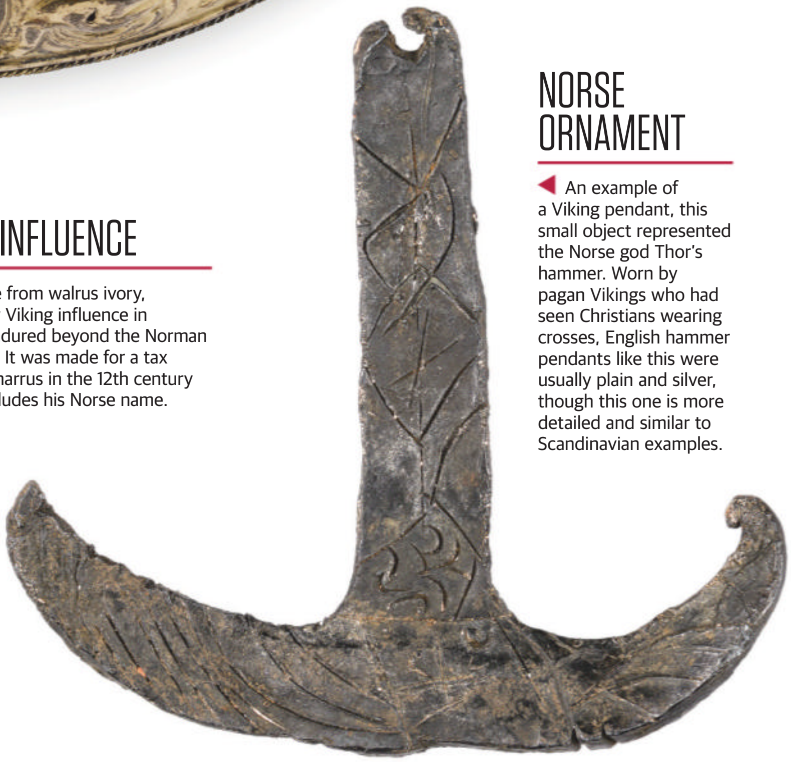
This silver gilt bowl was discovered buried with a Viking warrior in Ormside, Cumbria. The religious imagery featured on its decoration suggests it could have been taken from a holy place during a Viking raid. The bowl is an exemplary example of Anglo-Saxon silverwork.





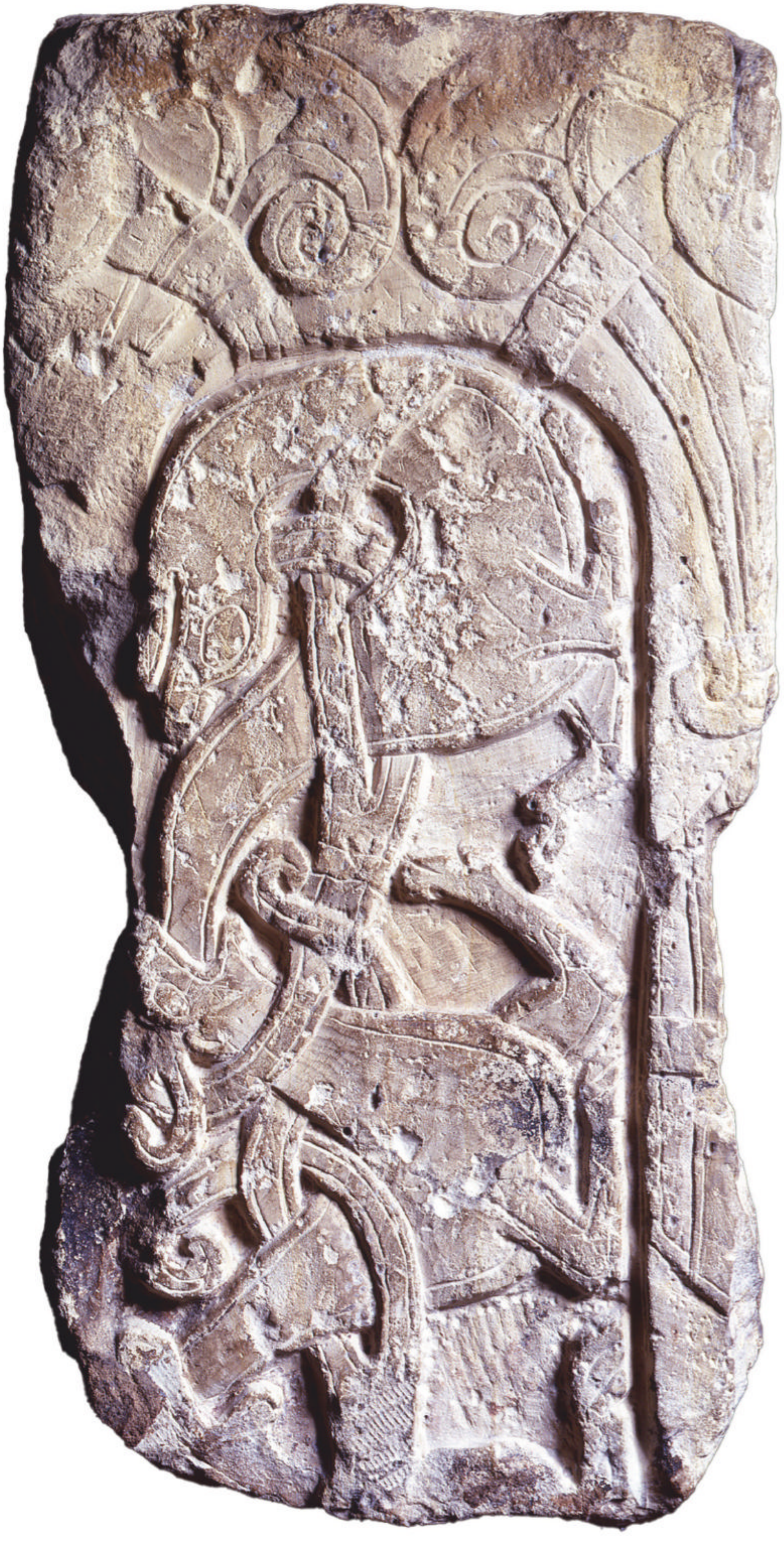
ENDURING INFLUENCE

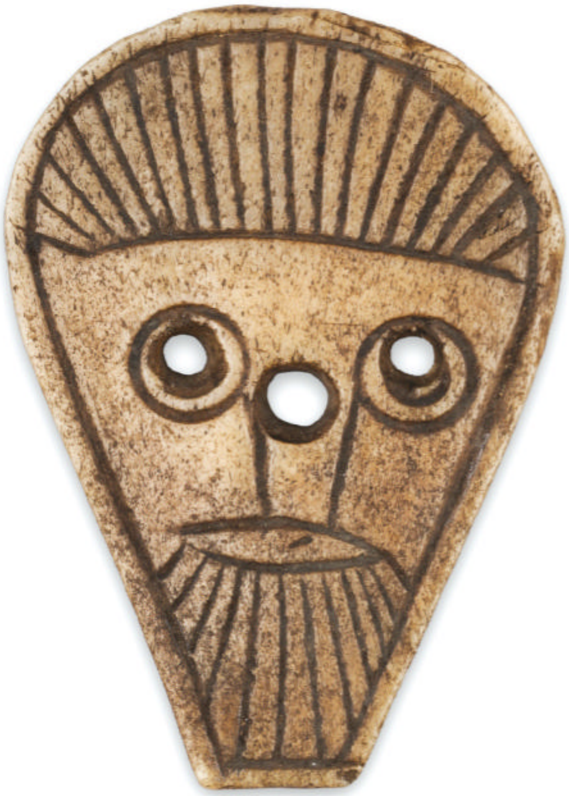
This seal, made from walrus ivory, demonstrates how Viking influence in England's north endured beyond the Norman Conquest of 1066. It was made for a tax collector named Snarrus in the 12th century and the design includes his Norse name.



NORSE ORNAMENT

An example of a Viking pendant, this small object represented the Norse god Thor's hammer. Worn by pagan Vikings who had seen Christians wearing crosses, English hammer pendants like this were usually plain and silver, though this one is more detailed and similar to Scandinavian examples.





VIKING ART

◀ One of the most exquisite examples of Anglo-Scandinavian carving, this small section of a larger cross was discovered in Newgate Street, York. The stone artefact is notable for its combination of carving styles, with some Viking elements recognisable and some from before the Scandinavian period.

SELF PORTRAIT

▲ This small plaque is a possible representation of how the Viking invaders saw themselves. Showing a bearded face with deep hollow eyes, it's made from bone and dates from between the 9th and 11th centuries. It was likely used as an ornamental mount.

Viking North
is open at the Yorkshire Museum in York until July 2027

All images: Courtesy of Antony Chappel-Ross for the York Museums Trust

PEN NAMES

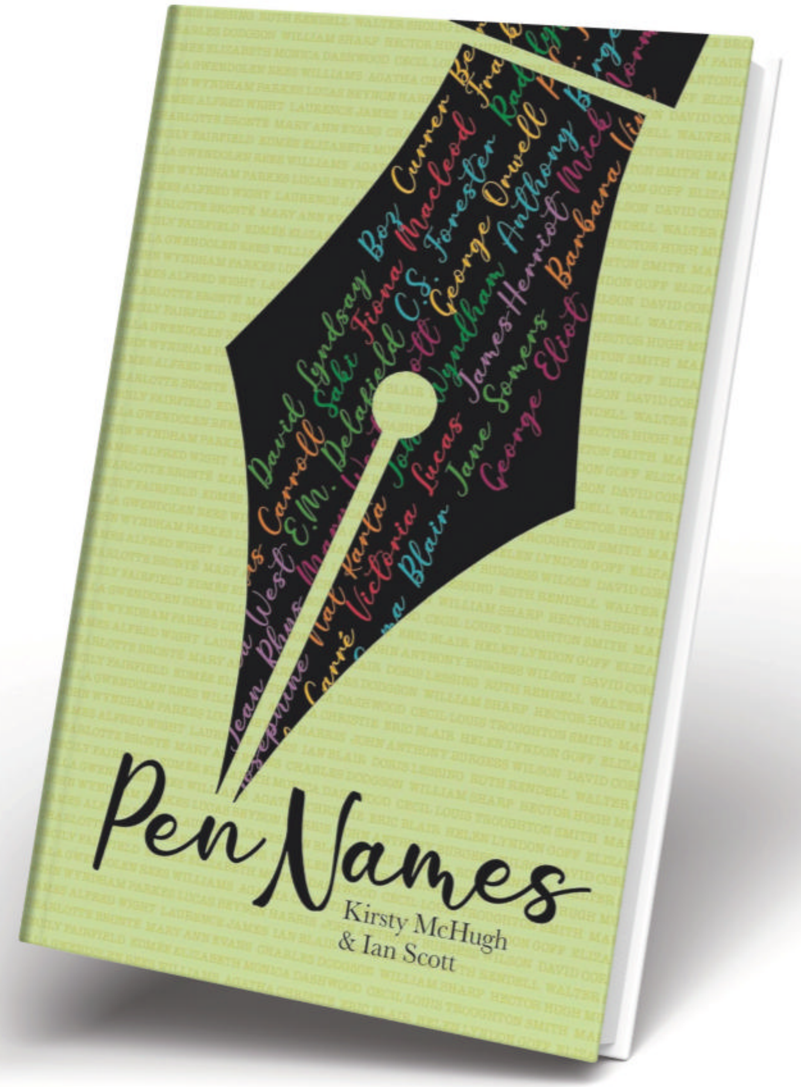
An intriguing exploration of the literary pseudonym through 40 authors

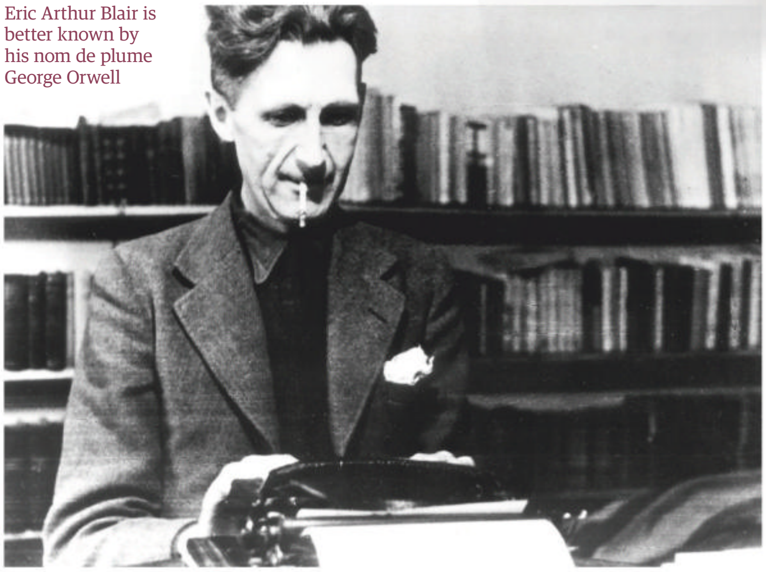
Authors: Kirsty McHugh and Ian Scott
Publisher: Bodleian Library Publishing
Price: £14.99
Released: Out now

Did you know that *Animal Farm* and *1984* author George Orwell was actually called Eric Arthur Blair? Or that Lewis Carroll, best known as the writer of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, was really named Charles Lutwidge Dodgson? These are just two of many fascinating facts found in *Pen Names*, a new book by Kirsty McHugh and Ian Scott, curators at the National Library of Scotland. Exploring the world of literary pseudonyms from the 19th century to the present day, *Pen Names* seeks to understand and highlight some of history's most interesting noms de plume and uncover the motivations behind them.

It's a manageable work, consisting of just under 140 pages, and begins with an informative introduction providing a brief overview of the literary pseudonym's history from the classical world until the beginning of the 19th century. McHugh and Scott outline from the start of their book that the decision to use a pen name tends to fall into one of two categories: to fit in or stand out. Whether to protect an author's identity or to increase their appeal to readers, literary pseudonyms became commonplace from the 1800s onwards, with some of writing's biggest names still known by their invented monikers.

Through clear sections dedicated to 40 historic and contemporary authors, *Pen Names* takes us through the reasoning of individual writers as they developed and used a nom de plume to author their work. Some of these literary figures are surprisingly well-known under their own names but chose to publish some work under a second name. Charles Dickens, for example, wrote under the name Boz, while the Queen of Crime Agatha Christie decided to publish other genres of fiction under the pen name Mary Westmacott. A more recent example included is the publishing of novels attributed to Robert Galbraith by *Harry Potter* author JK Rowling.



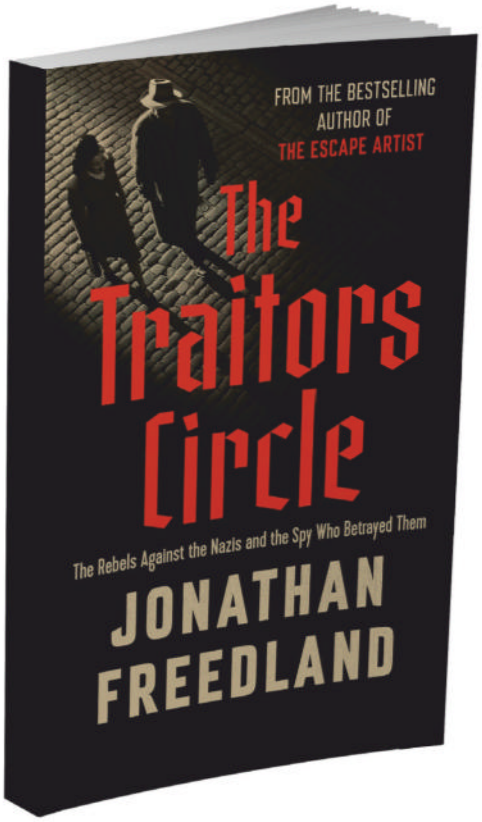


Eric Arthur Blair is better known by his nom de plume George Orwell

© Getty Images

Of the case studies in *Pen Names*, the most intriguing are those of authors who created personas for their pseudonym or even, in some instances, embraced them as an entirely new identity. A particularly compelling example is Scottish writer William Sharp, who came to see his pen name Fiona Macleod as a "manifestation of a different, feminine, side of his nature." Other studies highlight the predicament of female writers like the Brontë sisters, who wrote as Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell, and George Eliot, really Mary Anne Evans, who is still published under her pseudonym, and their challenges in the face of judgement in a patriarchal society.

Ultimately, this book questions if it's important to know and understand the identities of authors behind their pen names. By the end of McHugh and Scott's work, it's clear that although important in some cases, it's nonetheless a fascinating exercise to uncover the lives and motivations of these authors, especially of those we think we know so well. A clear, concise and well-researched book, *Pen Names* is an engaging and informative work that delves into an intriguing literary tradition. ***ES***



THE TRAITORS CIRCLE

The heartbreaking story of a group of rebels in Nazi Germany who were betrayed by one of their own

Author: Jonathan Freedland
Publisher: John Murray
Price: £22
Released: 11 September

During the height of Adolf Hitler's reign of terror, a group of unlikely individuals attempted to fight back. Among their number were a countess, a diplomat and a headmistress. However, one day in 1943 they were all betrayed. Now their story is being told in *The Traitors Circle*, the latest book from journalist and author Jonathan Freedland, whose 2022 book *The Escape Artist* is a retelling of a daring break out from Auschwitz.

The story Freedland attempts to tell is a dense one, yet his chosen method of telling it does not always make it easy to follow, flitting between the perspectives of the key historical figures. This is particularly disorientating during the opening chapter, which is divided into no-less than seven sections showing numerous perspectives on the night Hitler became German chancellor. The reader is given a lot of information upfront and for the beginning of Freedland's narrative it's a brave choice.

Yet *The Traitors Circle* is never dull for a moment. Freedland's prose is punchy and fast-paced, full of elegant descriptions and careful suppositions. He transforms real-world historical figures into three-dimensional characters. The level of research on display is also staggering and the book is filled with details that showcase the harsh reality of life in Nazi Germany.

The Traitors Circle is a dense but ultimately thrilling read. While its structure can initially be discombobulating for the reader, it provides each historical figure with ample focus, allowing the reader to truly feel the betrayal at the heart of the story. ***CM***

THE MIRROR OF GREAT BRITAIN

A deeply engaging reexamination of the transformational Stuart King James VI & I

Author: Clare Jackson
Publisher: Allen Lane
Price: £35
Released: Out now

From the author of the award-winning *Devil-Land*, a fantastic examination of the turmoil between the Spanish Armada and the Glorious Revolution, *The Mirror Of Great Britain* dials in on the reign of James VI and I of Scotland and England. Clare Jackson brings all of her knowledge and academic rigor to the topic and, as with her previous book, still manages to deliver a highly readable and accessible chronicle of events.

With his wide array of undeniable achievements and equally broad swathe of idiosyncrasies, James makes for a particularly captivating subject. He fought to unify the kingdoms of England and Scotland into one crown, he funded the Bible being translated so everyone could read it, and created England's first settlement in North America. He was also seemingly obsessed with witches (although not unique in this regard) and quite possibly financially illiterate, and he caused no shortage of tension with parliament.

Jackson clearly has a certain amount of admiration for James' achievements and does an excellent job of laying out the challenges faced by the young king of Scotland (he was an infant when he ascended the throne and about 17 when he took full control). Likewise, the Scottish king had no shortage of hurdles to overcome in convincing the English he was the man to lead them after Elizabeth I. Knowing as we do that a civil war was coming down the line, James' drive for unity has a note of a tragic endeavour to it. ***JG***

tv+
JASON MOMOA
CHIEF OF WAR

CHIEF OF WAR

Jason Momoa stars as the fearsome warrior Ka'iana in this bloodthirsty historical drama

Certificate: 18
Distributor: Apple TV+
Starring: Jason Momoa, Luciane Buchanan, Mainei Kinimaka
Released: Out now

The end of the 18th century and the dawn of the 19th saw the Hawaiian islands descend into war, before the separate kingdoms were finally unified. Meanwhile, the forces of the British Empire began to appear once more on Hawaiian shores. At the centre of this event was the warrior Ka'iana, now the lead figure in new Apple TV + series *Chief of War*.

Starring as Ka'iana is Jason Momoa (above), who's best-known for his roles in blockbuster films such as *Dune* (2021) and as the titular superhero in *Aquaman* (2018) and its sequel *Aquaman and the Lost Kingdom* (2023). Here, he shines as the fearsome chief who has become tired of war but finds himself drawn back by a corrupt king and an important prophecy.

The real Ka'iana was described by navigator and explorer John Meares as "near six feet five inches in stature" while "the muscular form of his limbs was of an Herculean appearance." Physically, Momoa is perfect casting and, given he spends much of the time in very little clothing, this physicality is on full display. Momoa also has the benefit of a natural warmth and charm that makes Ka'iana instantly likeable; but when ferocity is required, Momoa brings an intenseness that is truly terrifying.

And yet the series never feels like it is catering to Momoa's ego. There is a rich cast of complex characters and all are given ample time to develop their own storylines – even if at times it can be hard to keep track of all the moving parts. Not to mention the series never forgets that this is a show entitled *Chief of War* and the political machinations are frequently punctuated by thrillingly intense action sequences.

These scenes are the highlight of the series, in particular the battle sequences, which are not for the faint of heart. The level of brutality is truly shocking – war is seldom anything but. And that is part of the message; these sequences are not meant to be enjoyable - particularly one graphic moment in the opening episode that portrays the cruelty of a king drunk with power. What we witness is not a glorious conquest but a massacre.

The cinematography by Matthew Chuang and Michael Snyman looks gorgeous, allowing the locations to really shine. *Chief of War* was filmed primarily in New Zealand, although some locations were shot in Hawaii, and the series oozes authenticity. The majority of the dialogue (save for that spoken by the British characters) is in 'Ōlelo Hawai'i and subtitled for English-speaking audiences. This is an indigenous story largely told by indigenous people.

Chief of War is a thrilling and bloody historical drama series with a superb performance at its centre. The intense, graphic violence in some episodes may not be for everyone but it never feels overly gratuitous or exploitative. This is an authentic slice of historical drama that comes highly recommended. ***CM***

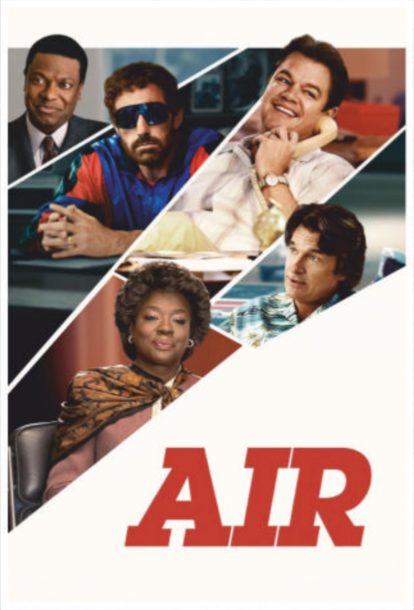
© Alamy

HISTORY VS HOLLYWOOD

AIR

Director: Ben Affleck **Starring:** Matt Damon, Viola Davis, Jason Bateman **Country:** USA **Year:** 2023

How an iconic brand was built around a future legend in sports



C
HISTORY
Many involved still can't agree on who deserves the credit for Air Jordan.

B
HOLLYWOOD
A surprisingly fun and engaging film about making a trainer.

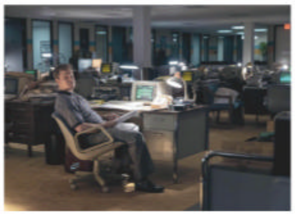
OVERALL
C
VERDICT

01 The film revolves around Sonny Vaccaro (Damon) betting the entire Nike Basketball division budget on signing Michael Jordan to create the Air Jordan brand and save the department. This is broadly true as Nike only had a 17 percent market share in 1984.

02 A key turning point in the deal is Vaccaro going over the head of Jordan's agent David Falk to speak with Deloris Jordan (Davis) in South Carolina. In reality, Falk helped arrange meetings between Nike and the Jordan family and was in favour of the collaboration.

03 Deloris is depicted as the brains of the Jordan team, negotiating his percentage cut of Air Jordan sales and leading negotiations. Michael Jordan insisted on this when giving his blessing for the film (he even asked for Davis to play the role).

04 Jordan's coach George Raveling (Marlon Wayans) advises Vaccaro on signing him and tells a story about getting a copy of Martin Luther King Jr's March on Washington speech. This is true, although Jordan credits Raveling as the key reason he signed with Nike.



05 Vaccaro claims Adidas founder Adolf 'Adi' Dassler was in the Hitler Youth (HY). This is incorrect as he was an adult when the Nazis came to power, joining the party in 1933 and supplying trainers to HY. But he also signed Jesse Owens to Adidas for the 1936 Olympics.

All images: © Alamy

RECIPE

APPLE CHARLOTTE

UK, 19-20TH CENTURY

This dish is sometimes credited to legendary French chef Marie-Antoine Carême, who wrote about it in 1806. However, the first recipe can be traced back to at least 1802 when it appears in *The Art of Cookery Made Easy and Refined* by John Mollard, a restaurateur operating from the 1780s to the 1830s. It's likely the dish, referred to in his cookbook as a "pulpton of apples", was a preexisting dessert, so its exact origins remain uncertain.

The recipe likely originates in Britain and its modern name probably comes from George III's wife Charlotte. Despite this royal connection, Apple Charlotte is actually a very simple and frugal recipe since it uses cheap, readily available apples and bread as its main ingredients. Bread as an ingredient in desserts can be traced back to at least the 11th century, when stale bread was soaked in a liquid then baked, making dishes like bread pudding or bread and butter pudding. In more recent years Apple Charlotte was in the limelight when it was requested by Lady Crawley in TV period drama *Downton Abbey*.

There are lots of ways in which this versatile recipe can be adapted, such as adding different types of berry or switching out the apple for pear. It can also be complemented with a range of different spices.

Serves: 4-6
Prep time: 15 **mins**
Cooking time: 55 **mins**

- **2 tbsp unsalted butter**
- **450g chopped eating apples (granny smiths, braeburns, etc)**
- **2 tbsp honey**
- **100g granulated sugar**
- **½ tsp cinnamon**
- **½ a vanilla bean, scraped**
- **1 tsp lemon zest**
- **2 tbsp apple brandy (optional)**
- **10-12 slices of white bread**
- **½ cup melted butter**

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01 Heat a pan over medium heat and add the two tablespoons of butter. Once melted, add the apples, honey, sugar, cinnamon, vanilla, lemon zest and brandy (if using).

02 Cook the apple mixture, stirring to combine, for between 10 to 15 minutes until the apple has softened but still has a little bite.

03 Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 200°C (400°F, Gas Mark 6).

04 Remove the crusts from the bread and flatten a little with your hand, then dip the slices into melted butter, covering generously.

05 Line a baking tin with the bread. You can use a larger springform pan for one large pudding or single-serving pudding basins. Make sure the slices overlap to leave no gaps.

06 Smaller pans should have top and bottom circles cut from the bread.

07 Once the pudding pan(s) is lined, pour in your apple mixture, top with more bread and bake in the oven for 30 minutes or until golden brown.

08 Allow your Apple Charlotte to cool a little before removing from the baking tin or basin and serve with vanilla ice cream or custard.

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